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A postcolonial and ecocritial reading of works by Mia Couto and T.C. Boyle

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Dissertação
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Important Note on Citations

Citations follow the MLA documentation style as defined by the Seventh Edition, published in 2009: *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.*

Abbreviations of Works

The following abbreviations will be used throughout:

Novels by Mia Couto

A Confissão da Leao (2012) – (ACL)

Terra Sonâmbula (1992) – (TS)

A Varanda do Frangipani (1996) – (VDF)

Um Rio Chamado Tempo, uma Casa Chamada Terra (2002) – (RCT)

Novels by T.C. Boyle

The Tortilla Curtain (1995) – (TC)

A Friend of the Earth (2000) – (FOE)

When the Killing's Done (2011) – (WTKD)

Abstract

This master's dissertation proposes a postcolonial ecocritical exploration of the points of intersection between writers from different sides of the geographic globe: Mia Couto from Mozambique and T. Coraghessan Boyle from the United States of America.

By comparing a variety of works by these two prolific and contemporary writers within the realm of ecocritial and postcolonial theory, varying understandings of 'the environment' are revealed and explored. The subject matters range from: the struggle over land rights and borders; the portrayal and speaking of and for animals; visions of an environmental apocalypse; the definitions of human and non-human. As this thesis shows, environmental reflections are couched in a belief system or being in the world which differ greatly and reflect the contemporary societies in which the authors reside. What they share is a humoristic exploration of ways of working towards a post-imperial, environmentally-based conception of community by questioning the human place within nature and by reclaiming what has become academically 'unfashionable' holistic concepts such as hope, understanding, belonging, and love. Their particular forms of 'deep fiction' (a concept playfully taken from deep ecology) maintain that love and defense of the earth can serve as a catalyst for social action and environmental justice implicit in the postcolonial project.

Key words: Ecocriticism, Postcolonialism, Mia Couto, T.C. Boyle, deep fiction, nature, environment, place, borders, animals, environmental apocalypse, posthumanism.

Resumo

Esta dissertação de mestrado propõe uma exploração ecocrítica e pós-colonial nos pontos de interação entre autores vindos de geografias completamente diferentes do mundo: Mia Couto de Moçambique e T. Coraghessan Boyle de Estados Unidos da América.

Ao fazer uma comparação de uma série de obras destes contemporâneos e prolíficos autores através da perspetiva da ecocrítica e pós-colonialismo, alguns entendimentos sobre o significado do 'meio-ambiente' são revelados e explorados. Temas da natureza ambiental e pós-colonial abordados aqui são: a luta pelos direitos da terra e fronteiras; a representação e concessão da voz aos não-humanos; visões de apocalipse de foro ambiental; e definições de humano e não-humano. Como esta dissertação pretende demonstrar, reflexões sobre o meio-ambiente encontram-se dentro de sistemas de crença ou de uma maneira de ser no mundo que varia bastante e que reflete as sociedades contemporâneas em que os autores vivem. O que os une é uma exploração humorística de maneiras como se pode realizar uma concepção de comunidade que é pós-imperial e ecológica através de uma interrogação do lugar do humano, da natureza e a forma como reiteram conceitos holísticos que a academia ou não considera ou considera obsoletos, tais como esperança, empatia, pertença e amor. Estes autores, que escrevem uma forma de 'ficção profunda' (expressão que decorre de *deep ecology*) defendem que amor e defesa da terra podem servir como catalisadores de ação social e da justiça ambiental implícita em situação pós-colonial.

Palavras chave: ecocrítica, pós-colonialismo, Mia Couto, T.C. Boyle, "ficção profunda", natureza, meio-ambiente, lugar, fronteira, animais, apocalipse do meio-ambiente, pós-humanismo.

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Introduction

> "The earth can do all right without friends, but men, if they are to survive, must learn to be friends of the earth." - John Muir[1]
>
> "Everything is connected to everything else" - Barry Commoner's First law of Ecology[2]

Like many of my generation growing up in the urban land-locked US of the 1970s, my young environmental imagination was formed, perhaps ironically, by the TV: the close-up of the crying Indian advertisement lamenting highway garbage; *Born Free*, the story of the orphaned African lions, whose mother had been killed by poachers and were later released into the wild; *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom* - an insurance company sponsored wilderness program which "took viewers to the far reaches of the globe for exciting encounters with animals in their natural habitats"[3]; Jacques-Yves Cousteau and his sea-exploring Calypso; *The Big Blue Marble*; and even *Alien*, the extraterrestrial parasite being that used humans to incubate their young. In the first grade, we frequently had bomb drills, learning how to crouch under our tables when the high-pitched alarm went off, uselessly covering the back of our necks with our hands to protect, we were told, our spinal columns. My first nightmares were (naturally?) of snakes and (unnaturally?) of nuclear bombs. The mountain-high city I lived in suffered regular drought and water rationing was implemented, to the chagrin of our neighbors, whose ornamental grass yellowed when watered only once a week.

My mother owned a gas-guzzling jeep which contributed no doubt to what was glumly called by the locals 'the brown cloud' that hung over the city. We would take frequent escapes from the city to the mountains to see the ghost towns that had been abandoned once all the gold had been removed and the water poisoned with the heavy metals used in its extraction. My favorite place to

[1] As quoted by Juan Martínez Alier in *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing: 2002. P.4 Web.

[2] Commoner, Barry. *The Closing Circle: Nature, Man and Technology.*New York: Bantam, 1972. Page 16.

[3] Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom Homepage.Web. 24 Mar. 2013. <http://www.wildkingdom.com>.

play was in our back alley: a street behind the block of houses that was used for placing garbage and cast-away objects. I loved collecting other people's junk. I read Richard Adams' *Watership Down* and cheered for the rabbits.

Later, as a teenager, I traveled to Germany and lived with a family whose home was in the path of the radioactive cloud released by the accident of Chernobyl. The day was sunny and bright, the first day of a real spring after an eternally rainy winter, and we were told not to go outside because of the invisible plutonic death that approached and was settling on the grass that the milk cows were eating. My mother, back in the United States, panicked. She wanted me home. There were harsh words from my German host: so, you want to take your daughter out of harm's way? What about us? Where do we go? Where is there a safe place for us to flee?

If nothing else, these reflections make it clear that my early conceptualization of the environment was mediated through popular culture in the form of TV nature programs defining the (mostly African) wild, and where nature was something pretty, found outside of the (mostly American) city and not in my own backyard. I was made aware early on that something was not right: I was born after the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, the book often sourced as igniting the environmental movement in the 1970s. Its primary focus was on the earth's frailty and called attention to the excesses of American consumer society, with their manicured lawns slurping up all the available water and their cars spewing gas into the air. I was confronted with the apocalypse: the ghost towns and Chernobyl just a reminder of our inevitable end, my young mind convinced that this had something to do with human greed. How, then, are we – am I – to stop all this? 20 years on, it is this question that drives this present thesis: as humans living on the planet in the 21st century – where the fear of the impending environmental crisis and what to do about it motivates any number of artistic and scholarly endeavors – what can my literary contribution be?

As Gersdorf and Mayer observe "(…) the field (of ecocriticism) is still lacking in precision instruments that would allow us to produce reliable theories on the historically, politically, and socially mutable relationship between culture and nature, or more accurately, between various

cultures and their respective notions of nature" (Gersdorf and Mayer 12). As a comparatist, it becomes clear that the field of ecocriticism has much to gain by examining literatures from beyond the center, and in seeing the ways that ideas of imperialism persist in conventional views that are created of nature. Furthermore, by comparing texts written from what could be conceived as 'globally distant' from one another and looking at the ways in which views of nature and place are conceived when viewed from vastly different physical and economic realities can reveal ethical viewpoints worth considering.

To this end, I have chosen to look at several novels by Mia Couto, novelist, short story writer, essayist, poet, and biologist from Mozambique and Tom Coraghessan Boyle (T.C. Boyle), a novelist, short story writer and educator from the United States.

About Mia Couto

Essayist, poet, and novelist, Mia Couto (António Emílio Leite Couto) writes in Portuguese. As a child, he was often found in the company of cats, earning him the name “Mia” (Meao). He was born to Portuguese parents living in Mozambique and witnessed firsthand the various difficult phases of his country's history, from colonial rule by Portugal to independence to civil war and the aftermath of the peace process. He is considered part of the leading edge of writers from Africa who focus on writing for a national identity and has been considered one of the best writers of his generation, having won many awards for his work, most notably the recognition of *Terra Sonâmbula* as one of the 12 best African books of the 20th century by the International Book Fair of Zimbabwe:

> "Poeta-contista, autor de romances cuja matriz é uma teia de várias narrativas imbricadas, Mia Couto é considerado pela comunidade lusófona como um dos maiores escritores contemporâneos de língua portuguesa, tendo os seus livros, muitos traduzidos em vários línguas, sido objecto de estudos diversificados" (Afonso 42).

His reader-base consists mostly of Portuguese readers from Portugal and Brazil with a growing readership in English with his work being translated into that language. In Mozambique,

however, Couto's work is read by only by a small portion of the population, since Portuguese is still a second language for the majority of the population and illiteracy rates are still very high. This fact is significant in that a common line connecting much of Couto's work is in exploring and translating borders: between orality and literacy, youth and age, war and peace, traditional and modern, culture and nature, human and non-human, the living and the dead. Although a writer, Couto values ideas found outside the realm of the written word, at the same time famously and polemically reinventing the Portuguese language to make a new vocabulary necessary to express these concepts. Besides a life as a writer, Couto is also a biologist, and, like Rachel Carson, author of *Silent Spring*, shares topical affinities with other biologist-writers. The works I will be focusing on are *Terra Sonâmbula* (1992), *A Varanda do Frangipani* (1996), *Um Rio Chamado Tempo, Uma Casa Chamada Terra* (2002), and *A Confissão da Leoa* (2012).

A summary of the Novels of Mia Couto

Terra Sonâmbula, published in 1992, won the National Fiction Award from the Association of Mozambican Writers (AEMO) and was chosen as one of the twelve best African books of the 20th century by the panel of the Zimbabwe Book Fair. Taking place during the end of the civil war in Mozambique but written at a time when no end was yet in sight, the plot flows along two different story lines which intersect in the beginning of the novel. The first follows the lives of Tuahir, an elderly man, and Muidinga, an orphan boy left for dead in a refugee camp who Tuahir nurses back to life. They move on together, ostensibly to find Muidinga's parents. At the side of an abandoned road, they find a burnt bus and the charcoal remains of many bodies along with a suitcase full of biographical notebooks written by another person, Kindzu, who we presume is one of the dead bodies on the side of the road. Between time spent scrounging for food in the nearby land, Muidinga reads Kindzu's notebooks, which then constitutes the second story line, of his life leading up to the civil war.

A Varanda do Frangipani first published in 1996, takes place in a home for the elderly, a converted fortress, somewhere in a remote part of Mozambique. A dead soldier lying buried

beneath a frangipani tree of the fortress is bothered by the efforts made by the living to memorialize him, and with the help of a armadillo-like spirit guide is told that to avoid such a fate, he must "die again" in the body of a live human whose days are numbered. The armadillo-like spirit, all-knowing of the future, identifies the coming to the fortress of an investigator from the city as a likely candidate, and the spirit of the dead solider, a silent witness, occupies a 'corner' of the policeman until the time that he, too, dies. The investigator comes to the fortress in investigate the murder of its administrator and in so doing comes face to face with other realities and ways of being, guided in this way to finding out that there are greater crimes than the death of a corrupt administrator.

Um Rio Chamado Tempo, uma Casa Chamada Terra (2002) begins with a young university student who returns to the island of his birth to help bury his grandfather, Mariano. Mariano, however, does not appear to be completely dead, and, while the family waits, memories and stories are told about the different members and friends of the family. The almost dead Mariano begins to communicate to his grandson on sheets of paper filled with confessions and as Mariano (the son) reads them, it is revealed that he is in fact Mariano (the defunct's) son and not his grandson. The story focuses upon the life in rural Mozambique as opposed to the city life represented by the uncle, and the forceful workings of the land itself, which refuses the accept Mariano's body to be buried, in making the truth come to the surface.

A Confissão da Leoa (2012) is Couto's most recent work of fiction, arising from a real event he encountered while working as a biologist. The rural town of Kulumani is stricken by a series of lioness attacks. Mariamar, a young girl living in the village and the hunter hired to kill the lions, Baleiro, alternately narrate the story, which ends up being much more about the cruelty of humans as a consequence of war and poverty than the viciousness of animals. The lioness is more than a symbolic representation of the animal world, whose instinct to kill is not questioned. She is also the spiritual manifestation of abused women, leveling her own brand of justice among the villagers.

About T.C. Boyle

T.C. Boyle (Tom Coraghessan Boyle), an American novelist and short story writer working in English, can be characterized as a writer concerned with the lives of the baby-boomer generation in the United States: people of his own generation who grew up after the second world war in a time of plenty. He won the PEN/Faulkner award in 1988 for his novel *World's End.* I have chosen to focus on the novels that have as a common thread their environmental and racial focus: *The Tortilla Curtain* (1995), *A Friend of the Earth* (2000) and *When the Killing's Done* (2011). These novels all take place in California, one of the wealthiest states in one of the richest countries in the world, and where the author lives and works. It is also the birthplace of the environmental movements of the 1970s. Boyle's protagonists are often overwhelmed by the consumer society, which defines them. In this world, the perception of nature and the natural (embodied in the land itself, animals both wild and domestic, and weather) is mediated, controlled, catalogued, contained, and 'othered.' Boyle, in his characteristically ironic and satirical style, explores the hypocrisies surrounding post-industrial ideas of the environment, paying particular attention to the ways in which the call to 'save the environment' is used as just another means for capital and personal gain.

A summary of the Novels of T.C. Boyle

The Tortilla Curtain (1995) is one of Boyle's most popular works of fiction. Taking place in a suburb of Los Angeles, California, the story follows the lives of two couples as they intersect on 'American soil': American liberals Delaney and Kyra and Mexican illegal immigrants Cándido and América. Boyle portrays the vastly different material circumstances the two couples face: The opulent comfort the one couple lives in contrasts dramatically with the near starvation of the other. The story comes to a climax when Cándido unwittingly causes a forest fire that threatens Delaney's home, later causing a mudslide where América's daughter 'Socorro' is lost.

A Friend of the Earth (2000) is an apocalyptic vision of southern California in 2025, after the collapse of the biosphere. Tyrone Tierwater, and ex-environmental terrorist, is working at a private zoo owned by a rock star and filled with the few 'wild' animals that remain in the world. The

books osculates between the present (future) day and the (now) past, remembering his times as an activist in the Earth First! organization, leading up to the death of his daughter, Sierra, who accidentally fell from a tree she was protecting from loggers. With the return of his ex-wife, Andrea, herself an Earth First! spokesperson on the payroll, Ty is asked once again to revive his former interest in activism by telling the story of Sierra's martyrdom.

Boyle's latest book, *When the Killing's Done* (2011) explores the conflict between a scientist working for the National Park Service, Alma Takesue, and environmental activists Dave LaJoy and Anise Reed. Alma is in charge of eliminating invasive species (rats and pigs) from the Anacapa islands off the coast of California in order to give the native species a fighting chance at survival. Dave and Anise, however, are against the slaughter of any animal and do guerilla actions in thwart Alma's actions, including placing poison antidote on the island for the rats to eat. In the end, the rats and pigs are killed and Dave himself dies when his boat moves into the path of a larger ship.

Organization of the Master's Thesis

Returning to my initial premise – which is to look at how authors from different cultural origins view nature and how these varying worldviews may eventually lead to a new ethic regarding our place with(in) nature – I hope that this thesis contributes to the debate on our accountability for the current environmental crisis and what, if anything, can be done to change it.

Chapter one formulates the theoretical approach I will be using by asking: What is postcolonial ecocriticism? I explore a range of ecocritical responses, settling upon ecocritical postcolonial theory and ecofeminism, which strives to free rhetoric from the dualism inherent in what Val Plumwood refers to as a "masculinist reason-centered culture." Couto's work more clearly attains this objective, and instead of characterizing his work as *magic realism* is then best described using the ecocritically sourced *deep fiction,* emphasizing the holistic view of interspecies relations, energy exchange, and transcendence found in ecology. As more African ecocritics are beginning to emerge, their unique perspective on African ecological consciousness varies from the ecological

views espoused in the environmental movements of the global north, mainly because of their perceived focus on human sustainability as an intrinsic part of environmental sustainability.

Chapter two asks the question: How is nature conceptualized in these works and how is being human defined by these concepts of nature? Here I explore the great divide between literary understandings of nature and culture and of how the "idea of nature" is culturally defined, with Kate Soper supplying the most useful definitions. The tenuous line that exists between these two terms is explored in ideas such defining a "native" as opposed to an "invasive" species and the difficulty in understanding natural habitats. Speaking for nature (Bate's *ecopoetics*) is itself a problem when one views a separation from nature. But if humans view themselves as a part of nature, then the cultural productions of literature in general and poetry in particular are valid ways of speaking for nature. In this, ecology becomes relevant as the connection between species is emphasized. Whether in the realist fiction of Boyle or Couto's *deep fiction*, the most striking differences lie in these modes of thinking. The invisible is an important quality in both. I will also examine the perceived tension between nature and technology, and the need to subjugate, idolize, or demonize what is man-made.

In Chapter three the main question is: In what way does language affect our perceptions of the environment and how does the use of humor and irony help to soften the impact of environmental disaster? I explore how language (and humor specifically) treats issues of "the environment." I will look at Joseph Meeker's famous argument that it is comedy, rather than tragedy, which attends to the healing values of survival, devoid of any great triumph, progress or perfection, instead highlighting only a "muddling through" life. For the postcolonial ecocritic, this is a call for an acceptance of the biological limitations not only for individuals, but also of the biosphere in general. In exploring the pastoral return to paradise, the desire for a return to an idealized arcadia is equated with a gentle and loving nature. Aesthetic play here is important when reflecting upon weighty issues such as war and environmental disasters. Boyle plays ironically with characters in the environmental movement while Couto toys with racial stereotypes surrounding ideas of nature. The absurd also makes use of the natural environment, exposing a borderland

between what is funny and truly horrible, such as the boy/chicken in *Terra Sonâmbula*. To opt for a naturally inspired definition of human comedy, one cannot afford the "wasteful and destructive luxuries of a tragic view of life" (Meeker 167). Comedy calls for humility and acceptance, requiring humans to change their way of thinking rather than their environment.

Chapter four focuses on the questions arising from private property: In what way does the creation of borders affect our relationship with the land and with other people? Here I consider place, the creation of borders, and private property, beginning with the concept of deep ecology, which regards everything as connected to – and a part of – everything else. The shift that takes place with the formation of private land that was previously communal and the changing states of belonging to a place to merely visiting it. This break creates an inside and outside that is variously explored in these novels. Borders are naturally occurring (as in rivers and oceans) as well as geophysically contested spaces (national borders, walls, houses, cars) and are even temporal. From these borders comes the concept of entitlement: the (interspecies) right to live in a space.

Chapter five explores the question of the animal: In what ways are animals portrayed in these works and what relationship exists between animals and humans? No literary ecocritical study would be complete without looking at the portrayal of non-humans, first by exposing the predominant anthropomorphic worldview – the very assertion of human separateness from their biological imperatives – as Darwin first proposed. I consider the impossibility of speaking for the non-human (let alone any "other"). Hierarchies are explored as well as the historical origins of the animal/human divide. I then look at how these authors explore the human/non-human relationship in their novels, from the tension between biophilia and biofobia in Boyle's work to animal superiority in Couto.

Chapter six concerns itself with the idea of progress: How is development viewed in these texts with regards to the natural environment? And in what ways does neocolonialism affect nature in these works? Chapter six reflects upon the concept of progress as it relates to the environment and the creation of a post-human perspective, which challenges the hegemony of humanism. Both

the words "development" and "sustainability" are rhetorical tools of manipulation used frequently to justify environmental degradation and requiring a commodification of nature. Boyle and Couto look at ways in which concepts of modernity are couched in industrialized and capital development and how this is frequently in conflict with the "natural" environment. While Boyle identifies capitalist greed as the source of America's "fall," Couto's work reflects an alternative view to the procession of human development from the aftermath of colonial occupation. Westling's *animot posthumanist* perspective helps to define the "human place within the ecosystem by interrogating or erasing the boundary that has been assumed to set our species apart from the rest of the living community" (Westling 30).

Chapter seven looks at environmental fears: How does fear of nature and natural disasters in these novels affect human decisions? By focusing upon the powerful metaphor of environmental apocalypse by human agency, I defend that such apocalyptic literature serves as a deterrent to a real crisis. I identify the general modes of such literature (Buell) using specific examples in Boyle and Couto of floods and fires and the function of children in environmental apocalypse.

The eighth and final chapter looks at action: in what ways do these novels contribute to the defense of the earth? Its most important mandate is in recognizing that ecocritial and postcolonial studies offer important perspectives for teachers of literature and should be reflected in the canon taught to students at every level. Bate, Couto, Murphy and others argue that literature is humankind's unique skill, which can be used not only to nominate things, but also to create realities that connect us to nature. In defending the earth, the pervasive and popular belief that human overpopulation is the primary source of environmental degradation is identified as a continuation of neocolonial rhetoric, which inevitably places the blame on women from the global south. A similar polarization is created with the definition of "slow violence" (Nixon), which is an essential concept in understanding the kind of violence and its effects that is perpetuated over long periods of time, often lasting generations.

My final remarks in the conclusion are reflections on environmental ethics that are raised from a reading of these works.

Chapter One: Defining an ecocritical and postcolonial approach

Many theorists have commented upon the difficulty of defining ecocriticism and postcolonialism, chief of these due to the disagreement among their practitioners. In this thesis, I have chosen to use some of the theoretical tools provided from both fields of inquiry. Among other things, ecocritical thinking allows for contemplation of the physical environment and its influence on and representation in literature, not merely as a symbol or background, but as an active agent: "ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies" (Glotfelty and Fromm xviii). Ecocriticism also looks at ways in which issues surrounding the environment (such as its exploitation or preservation) are expressed in works of literature, oftentimes taking an interdisciplinary approach, involving the natural sciences such as biology and ecology and the social sciences such as anthropology. Ecocriticism can tackle head on the perceived competition between scientific (rational) thinking and the humanities, seeking to bridge the gap between the two in order to find ways to prevent the destruction of the environment. The role of literature in elucidating issues surrounding environmental thoughts is essential: as Lawrence Buell so aptly stated, "the success of all environmentalist efforts finally hinges not on 'some highly developed technology, or some arcane new science' but on 'a state of mind': on attitudes, feelings, images, narratives," all of which can be found in "acts of environmental imagination" (Caminero-Santangelo and Myers 3), or literature. Ecocritical literary scholars are, for the most part, interested in altering perceptions and ethical considerations for and of the environment, in its defense.

Current trends in ecocritical debate in the US seem to focus more on bridging the gap between the 'two cultures' in the academy: science and the humanities (as Glen Love argues in *Practical Ecocriticism*) and in reconciling, ethically, economic and environmental concerns on a global scale (as Deane Curtin emphasizes in *Environmental Ethics for a Postcolonial World* and Patrick Murphy in *Ecocritical Explorations in Literary and Cultural Studies*). Revealing neocolonialism in the form of environmental exploitation the world over should be a part of the

ecocritical project, as is the need to deepen scientific knowledge of the ways in which the earth "operates" on a number of levels. More importantly, it is African critical contributions to this project, which bring new ideas about place, being-in-the-world (spirituality) and identity, often with a postcolonial eye, revealing the close connection between neocolonialism and environmental degradation. [4]

What initially evolved from an analysis of US western nature writing, ecocriticism has been embraced by international and interdisciplinary scholars under the global concern for the current environmental crisis. Gersdorf and Meyer believe that the crisis is the direct result of "modern culture's philosophical assumptions, epistemological convictions, aesthetic principles, and ethical imperatives" (Gersdorf and Meyer 9). As a theoretical model which can be used to examine definitions of nature and culture and the boundaries that are built up between them, ecocriticism can involve a whole series of ideas and ideologies that reveal what it means to be human in a post-nuclear world. In an era when our very existence is threatened by environmental disaster in the form of industrial and nuclear accidents, extreme weather from without, and biological and genetic changes from within, an ecocritical postcolonial examination of literature is a way of reflecting upon and activating interest in ecological and social issues where they cross-over. The borderless world, which our current environmental plight so clearly exposes, serves as a primary call to action where we are all in the same boat. Ecocritical perspectives shed a light on issues of literature that have been seen as periphery to the drive of plot; that is, the natural environment or setting of the story or the normally voiceless animals and plants that permeate it. As one shifts the focus from an anthropomorphic viewpoint the effect on the reader is an ecologically widening one: a larger, more complex, and (arguably) interesting and deeper view of the complexities of life is revealed in which humans play just a part.

[4] There are few published collections of interdisciplinary work involving African Studies and the environment. The most recent was published in 2011 *Environment at the Margins: Literary and Environmental Studies in Africa,* but edited by researchers working in universities in the United States and with work of mostly Anglophone origin.

Cross-fertilization between disciplines is essential. An understanding of ecology, history, philosophy, science, and even ethics can play an important part in ecocritical inquiry. How, then, should ecocriticism be defined and how do postcolonial concerns fit in?

Using postcolonial and ecocritical theoretical tools

Ecocriticism began as a sub-field in Anglo-American literary studies in the United States but increasing scholarship has been interested in the intersection between ecocriticism and postcolonial studies in their similar "sense of political commitment, interdisciplinary, and the interrogation of capitalist development and progress" (Caminero-Santangelo and Myers 4). The result of this hybridization is the "greening" of postcolonial criticism, sensitizing what some have deemed to be a purely anthropocentric theory to include environmental factors and players.[5] Ecocriticism has also gained something in the exchange by including postcolonial texts from the 'periphery' into the mix and thus challenging what has been often noted as a kind of provincialism of ecocriticism from the US. It is part of the goal of postcolonial ecocritics to expand what has been predominately American and British ecocriticism to include thinking from other parts of the globe, from other histories, cultural differences, and languages.

Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, in their recent book *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* (2010), reveal some of the difficulty of defining both ecocriticism and post colonialism due to the wide range of ideas exhibited by the critics themselves in both fields (2). They argue that the best way to define this concept is to recognize that "the proper subject of post colonialism is colonialism, and to look accordingly for the colonial imperial underpinnings of environmental practices in both 'colonizing' and 'colonized' societies of the present and the past" (3). They prefer the use of the term coined by Alfred Cosby – *ecological imperialism* – which can have a wide range of applications, from the appropriation of indigenous lands and the introduction of non-domestic livestock to the limitation of dualistic thinking of the environment (the reason-centered culture that ecofeminist Val

[5] Huggan and Tiffin note, however, that there is in fact a long history of ecological concern in postcolonial criticism, emphasizing that social and environmental justice are not always seen as at odds with one another. (*See Postcolonial Ecocriticism* 3)

Plumwood believes still persists and is leading the us to the brink of the "biophysical limits of the planet" (Plumwood, *Environmental* 5)); to bio-colonization which covers the appropriation and ownership of genetic material, genetic modification and the like (such as is used in the 'green revolution'), to environmental racism, defined by Deane Curtin as "the connection, in theory and practice, of race and the environment so that the oppression of one is connected to, and supported by, the oppression of the other" (Curtin 145).

While postcolonial concerns cover such ideas such as the establishment of colonialism (and racism, sexism, indignity, diaspora, native, invader, societies and culture), ecocritical concerns can find parallels in issues of ownership, the exotic, what is animal, what is human, what is domestic, and what is wild. By looking at works based on these criteria, it is clear that an ostensibly 'ecocritical' work of fiction by Boyle can also be viewed and analyzed using the tools of postcolonial criticism, just as it is possible to consider a 'postcolonial novel' by Couto along the lines of ecocritical perspectives.

So that while there is not one satisfactory definition of ecocritical postcolonial theory as it is related to literature, I define it here as examining how nature is represented in works of literature and the ways in which power and language work to create that representation. In the case of the two writers I will be looking at, I am interested in how the idea of the "environment" is variously exhibited, often very differently, and posit that one of the main reasons for the disparity in worldviews has to do with their different perceptions of reality as a result of contrasting views of the nature's autonomy. T.C. Boyle's works examined here concern themselves with the preservation of "the environment" – the vaguely external concept – as it is understood by the protagonists that populate the novels, all within the context of the hyper-industrialized consumer world of his presumed readership. His novels that I have chosen to focus on look at questions of the preservation of the environment from a particularly US liberal perspective, where various environmentalist identities are developed and explored in these three books.

In the case of Mia Couto, the environment in the form of animals, plants, geographical places (the earth and rivers), and the weather are significant actors in the development of the plot, a factor which many critics assert brings it into the realm of magic realism, which I discuss more completely in Chapter 2.[6] In his novels, the earth is an active agent: it walks, acts, and even disappears all together. Animals are not merely the symbols of human actors – as are, for example, T.C. Boyle's coyotes – but as guides, totems, and messengers from the heavens. Trees, too, play a fundamental role in both writers' works; Boyle's giant redwoods forming the final battle space for the environmentalist war against progress and Couto's frangipani a conduit between ways of knowing, the *genius loci* on the patio in *A Varanda do Frangipani.*

Ecology, Environmental Ethics and Magic Realism

In 1971 Barry Commoner wrote the four laws of (political) ecology, taking from the then emerging scientific field of the same name, into such wonderful (and marketable) sound bites as "everything is connected to everything else", "everything must go somewhere", "nature knows best," and "there is no such thing as a free lunch"[7] Commoner's ideas helped to popularize the idea of sustainability in the United States, where he felt that the leading cause for environmental degradation was the unbridled use of technology and innovation. The introduction of an *environmental ethic* is the call of action from writers such as Deane Curtin (*Environmental Ethics for a Postcolonial World*), who find that, for his young American audience, an awareness of environmental issues is essential for combatting social injustice around the world and at home. An environmental ethic can help understand a globalized world in which issues such as the 'green revolution' can be better understood and combatted on a local and personal level, primarily resorting

[6] The classification of Couto's work as one of magic realism is held by several literary scholars, namely, Maria Nazareth Soares Fonseca and Maria Zilda Ferreira Cury in *Mia Couto: Espaços ficcionais.* I will explore this terminolgy further in Chapter 2 and advance my own ecocritical classification.

[7] Miller, Stephen (October 1, 2012). "Early Voice for Environment Warned About Radiation, Pollution". *The Wall Street Journal.* Retrieved October 2, 2012. "In his 1971 best seller *The Closing Circle*, Mr. Commoner posited four laws of ecology: that everything is connected; that everything must go somewhere; 'nature knows best; and there is no such thing as a free lunch.'"

to one's individual purchase, more than political, power. Curtin finds that, rather than cursing it, technology and innovation are tools that can be used to further social and environmental justice, as long as the ethics behind them are clear.

William Rueckert in "Literature and Ecology" considered ecology "as a subversive science" since it relied upon ecological visions which challenged the capitalist growth economy "which dominates all emerging and most developed industrial states" (107). To elide the idea of ecology with literature, Rueckert saw ecology's preoccupation with the small in relation to the whole as the central tenant of ecological vision and of the creation of poetry, which is a kind of "stored energy" (108). Enigmatically, he believed that "properly understood, poems can be studied as models for energy flow, community building, and ecosystems" (108).

While, in 1996, Cheryll Glotfelty, in her groundbreaking anthology *The Ecocriticism* defined ecocriticism as “a study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (xviii), it has since extended to a definition beyond that of literary analysis, moving into areas of ethics and philosophy, as well as the study of ecology. Ecology, it has been argued, can provide a variety of metaphors for the critic of literature – an 'environmental imagination' – as was coined by Laurence Buell in his 1995 eponymous book. Taken together, a postcolonial and ecocritical perspective creates an important *environmental ethic*, whereby social and environmental concerns elide and individual action is a key component in affecting change. Although Huggan and Tiffin note that the use of the environmental sciences, especially ecology are "legitimately accused of invoking more in hope than understanding" (13), I feel that such a statement does more to further legitimize the masculinist, reason-centered culture that Val Plumwood criticizes, as it places a higher value on empirical facts than on equally important spiritual and ethical considerations. Considering that such ideas taken from ecology are only *aesthetic* aspects (its metaphorical ideas given less importance than the scientific ‘facts’ put forth, and thus less subject to serious consideration) leads once again to the kind of judgement of value that writers like Mia Couto are

quick to challenge in their works. For Couto, the call for 'hope' implicit in holistic systems still found in his native country are necessary for rebuilding after years of war and genocide.

> "Temos que repensar o mundo no sentido terapêutico de o salvar de doenças de que padece. Uma das prescrições médicas é mantermos a habilidade da transcendência, recusando ficar pelo que é imediatamente perceptível" (Couto, *Interinvenções* 107).

Another aspect to take into consideration is the little questioned anthropocentric view of the world, where human agency is given primacy over other species and life forms: the silenced majority. Postcolonial readings help to reveal this prejudice and to bring to the table the consideration that racist ideologies of imperialism persist as well on an environmental scale. If we are to move towards an egalitarian society, a "post-imperial and environmentally based conception of community" then we must rethink what it means to be human (Huggan and Tiffin 6). Just as the colonial construct maintained and enforced a hierarchy of race and class, so too is it useful to question how this hierarchal construction is applied in views of the animal and plant world, where exploitation and the inferiority of non-human life goes, for the most part, unquestioned to the present day. In this, ecology is usefully applied, in that it insists in the distinction between viewing the utility of nature for human benefit versus the idea that things need not have such perceived utility in order to be valued: The all-important distinction between "things-in-themselves" and "things-for-us" (Murphy, *Ecofeminist* 194). Boyle's *When the Killing's Done* has as its central tenant, what gives one the ethical right to kill another species? How does the scientific qualification of "invasive species" defined and then used to justify – and legitimize – what amounts to mass murder, the favoring of one species over another? And in what ways is this thinking merely a continuation of imperialist ideas of hierarchy, clearly transferring racist ideologies into speciesism.

Mia Couto is both a biologist and a fiction writer from Mozambique, a perceived incompatibility that has taken some by surprise. One of the questions that he is most frequently asked is how he reconciles literature and biology? To which he replies that there exists no conflict between the two, that

> "…hoje, não sei como poderia ser escritor caso eu não fosse biólogo. (...) O que me alimenta é o diálogo, a intersecção entre os dois saberes. O que me dá prazer é percorrer como um equilibrista essa linha fronteira entre pensamento e sensibilidade entre inteligência e intuição, entre poesia e saber científico" (Couto, *Interinvenções* 57-8).

It is at this juncture that the work of Glen Love in *Practical Ecocriticism* is useful. In this book, he defends that having a grasp of science – in particular the life sciences and evolutionary biology – is necessary for any true ecocritical reading and that the "war between the humanities and the sciences" can find common ground in an ecocritical debate. Literary studies, he argues, requires a more complete grounding in our biological beginnings as proposed by Darwin in *The Descent of Man,* in order to better grasp our cultural imagination. Like Couto, the question itself is not as important as is the dualistic gap revealed by a perceived incompatibility of the definition of that which is 'real'.

Returning to ecocriticism's daring in exploring the 'conflict' between the humanities and sciences, both authors' address this issue in their works. Mia Couto is clear in his support for scientific studies, which he undertakes in his "day" job as a field biologist. At the same time, he is aware that there are other forces at work in the minds of most of the people who live in his country, and that a certain humility is necessary in order to appreciate and understand the enchantment that the unknown, the mysterious, and the strange has on the reader. Furthermore, "fiction writing often portrays 'reality' more effectively than scientific work and/or makes it more accessible to the general public and decision makers" (Hammar 125).

Is there an African ecocriticism?

Couto's work, while taking up clearly postcolonial themes, has had little response from ecocritical theorists, due in part, I believe, to his status as an African writer writing in Portuguese were only recently some of his work is available in English translation – the language in which most (published) theorists practice. As of the writing of this essay, very little explicitly ecocritical

work on African literatures has been published. This, the editors of *Environment at the Margins* claim, is because

> African writers have primarily addressed pressing political and social issues in colonial and postcolonial Africa (...) in lived environments, the social implications of environmental change and the relationships between representations of nature and power" (Caminero-Santangelo and Myers 7).

These writers reject what has been deemed "first-wave environmentalism" from the West, with its perceived emphasis on conservation in a fantasized "pure state" and coming from affluent sources. The environmentalism of the affluent can shift the attention away from social problems, thus making it unwittingly a part of "the colonial project" (Caminero-Santangelo and Myers 7). But rather than an either/or proposition, African ecocritics introduce the works of African authors into the discourse on ideas about nature, its preservation, and its representation.

Mia Couto, in his essay "Línguas que não sabemos que sabíamos" (*Interinvenções*) tells of an episode that happened to him while working as a biologist in Ilha Inhaca in Mozambique. A team of UN scientists arrived with the goal of providing "environmental education" to the local population, armed with "education kits:" slides and projectors "na ingénua esperança de que a tecnologia é a salvação para problemas de entendimento e de comunicação" (Couto, *Interinvenções* 19). As the meetings progressed, the problems of communication were quickly revealed, not of the language as such, but in the ideas behind it. Since the word "scientist" did not exist in the local vernacular, the translator chose the word for "witch doctor". The word "environment" also did not exist in an autonomous form and so the translator chose a word that, among other things, meant the "big bang". The population was then asked to identify "environmental problems" they encountered on the island. After some debate, they decided to identify their problem with the wild pigs called "tinguluve" that were destroying their gardens. This word also means "the spirit of the dead that get sick after dying." The UN consultants found the solution to be simple: kill the pigs. To the group listening, this was an unspeakable solution. The local understanding that an animal can simultaneously occupy various states – animal, spirit being, and human-animal – is something that a

western mind has difficulty comprehending, let alone believing. Couto, as a biologist-writer, has a unique and therapeutic perspective on the issue of what is the 'environment' in Mozambique, where meanings and language itself is intrinsic to its understanding and where the "habilidade da transcendência" itself is essential for "repensar o mundo no sentido terapêutico" (Couto, *Interinvenções* 105).

Can a book from the US be 'postcolonial'?

To ask if there is an African ecocriticism also begs the question: To what extent can literature from a white, male, American like T.C. Boyle be considered a postcolonial text? I argue that it is possible if by "postcolonial" one means the study of unequal relationships that are derived by the occupation of land (territories). The racial and border conflict which Boyle explores in his early novel *The Tortilla Curtain* continues to be wildly read and discussed, both within the United States and abroad. Occupation, sovereignty, and the right to life are central issues in his other two novels, where animals and plants are the 'indigenous populations' being displaced, and even assimilated (for example, the wild Patagonian fox is, at the end of *A Friend of the Earth*, finally domesticated and mistaken for a dog). In *When The Killing is Done*, the exotic and wild (native species) are set apart from the invasives ('colonizing' plants and domestic animals). The play between concepts of native and foreign and how these definitions are used to legitimize violence and possession are terms clearly found in the world of postcolonial discourse.

Embarking then, on an ecocritical and postcolonial analysis of these works, the first question to explore are the varying concepts of nature and culture as expressed by these two authors. How are the boundaries between nature and culture defined? In what way do these texts challenge or legitimize these terms? Are there cultural differences apparent in the very definitions of culture and nature?

Chapter Two: Nature, Culture and "Deep Fiction"

In this chapter, I explore how nature and culture are conceptualized in both Couto's and Boyle's work and how other dualisms come into play – and are often blurred – to explain what are referred to as conceptual "ideas of nature": nature and culture, the living and the dead, the native and the non-native, rational and emotional, the visible and the invisible, to see and to look away, tradition and the modernity, animality and spirituality, what is perceived as 'real' and that which is 'supernatural.' Boyle's brand of 'environmental realism' contrasts with what I would like to define as Couto's 'deep fiction', a concept which I borrow from ecology in an effort to refocus a reading of his work away from denominations such as *magic realism,* which continue to propagate dualistic thinking that ecocritical perspectives, especially ecofeminism, seek to transcend.

Mia Couto, in a paper delivered to a public composed mostly of scientists, asked the question "O que leva as pessoas a pensar que existe um problema de compatibilidade entre os dois fazeres [literatura e Biologia]?" (*Interinvenções* 56). As both a writer and a biologist, he is at home with the dualism of thought presented in these two worlds, characterizing his work as that of "um equilibrista (nessa) linha de fronteira entre pensamento e sensibilidade, entre inteligência e intuição, entre poesia e saber científico" (*Interinvenções* 58). Besides a purely aesthetic pleasure derived from exploring the space left between these two paths of knowledge, Couto stresses the power these epistemological sources have in challenging the preconceived idea that "a Terra, a Vida e o Ambiente" are "entidades feitas, exteriores ao Homem":

> "Tanto a Terra como a Vida são produções contínuas, são redes de interacções feitas de inacabados processos, de irresolúveis desequilíbrios" (*Interinvenções* 60-61).

The mutability of the natural environment and our inevitable place within its orbit as active players runs counter to what Lynn White, Jr. in his essay "Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" calls the "Baconian creed" that still persists in much of western thought, when "a marriage between

science and technology" was used to try to make some sense out of the natural environment and to use it as a way to control nature (4). As White affirms, the roots of our current ecologic crisis stem from a democratic culture in which the tools of technology are used to tame the uncertainties of nature, using the plow, for example, as a tool for growing more crops in order to produce excess, the foundation of capital. More importantly, White identifies that the "victory of Christianity over paganism was the greatest psychic revolution in the history of our (western) culture," (9) including in the mix ideas of "perpetual progress" and of the "natural" (i.e.: God-given) superiority of humans over animals (anthropocentrism) to which many other religions did not ascribe. In stark contrast to paganism, White argues that Christianity not only established the dualism between man and nature but also instilled the idea that exploitation of nature was ordained by God:

> "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl in the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" - (*Genesis* 1:28).[8]

Spirits of the natural world (as understood in animist religions) presented an idea of sovereignty and agency – even equality – with the natural world, which had, up until that point, helped to protect trees and wildlife from wanton destruction by humans. Sacred groves, protected by many pre-Christian animist societies, were cast as false idols and destroyed by Christian missionaries because of the individual spirit that they housed (White 10).

What both Couto and White illustrate in these examples is perhaps the most fundamental question affecting both ecocritical and postcolonial studies: the very idea of dualism and the "othering" that is then implicit. Val Plumwood, in her seminal work "Feminism and the Mastery of Nature" (1993) argues that this kind of dualism involves the construction of hierarchies, where the power center, the "master model,"[9] always subordinates nature:

[8] Prologue to *When the Killing's Done* by T. C. Boyle

[9] Val Plumwood's 'master model' is taken from the concept of 'master subject' (first introduced by both Haraway and Hartstock). See footnote to page 35.

> "The line of fracture between reason and nature runs deeply through the key concepts of western culture. In the contrast set, virtually everything on the 'superior' side can be represented as forms of reason, and virtually everything on the underside can be represented as forms of nature" (44).

Going beyond this dualistic thinking, then, is essential to repudiate the existing master subject. Dualism itself is used to justify modes of oppression stemming from a long list of dualistic ideas that place culture above nature and reason above emotion. And while Plumwood's argument makes a case for demonstrating how western philosophy has subjugated so-called 'female' nature, other philosophers such as Kate Soper are interested in how the very words "culture" and "nature" have evolved as opposite terms and are used in current rhetoric. On the other end of the spectrum, thinkers like Gary Snyder elicit the Zen principle of "the Way," avoiding dualism altogether and evoking a nature that is expressed through a force through which humans become enlightened by living in nature and contemplating it, rather than using the tools of culture (written texts, for example) to gain knowledge. For postmodernist Lyotard, nature becomes the hidden life that must be defended against excessive culturization (Coupe 121).

In rejecting dualism and affirming only difference of the categories of nature and culture and in exploring the "creative play along the border of such categories" (Coupe 121), Lyotard echoes Couto's stance on the same subject, where nature is appropriated to produce culture. That both Boyle and Couto explore this borderland is the subject of this chapter. Couto's particular brand of what I will call 'deep fiction' – taking from ecology's call for a recognition of deep, interconnected, and often mysteriously complex natural forces taking place from within – gives nature and natural forces narrative strength while challenging western scientific realism's claim to absolute truth, a postcolonial imperative.

Kate Soper's critical stance in "The Idea of Nature" argues for a more careful consideration of how images of nature are used and against the co-opting of the 'romantic' ideas of nature, where pastoral imagery is often appropriated for the commodification of things. Thus the demonizing of culture as 'artifice' and human action as necessarily 'decadent' when contrasted to nature's presumed

'health and integrity' show more about how the idea of nature can be constructed to promote a variety of interests (123). The capitalist 'business' of nature conservancy underlined in *A Friend of the Earth,* with its marketing gimmicks and highly-paid spokespeople, reveals some of the problematic that such a stance can have, for as Ty decides to leave his "criminal" life as a consumer behind and dedicate his life to saving the earth, he has come to the conclusion that humans are no longer a part of nature and so: "in order to be a friend of the earth you need to be an enemy of the people" (*FOE* 56). Couto has a similar warning about casual populist usage of the term "the environment":

> "O Meio Ambiente foi hoje convertido numa bandeira, numa entidade mistificada (...) O que está em causa é podemos questionar a noção de Ambiente. Não podemos deixar que as noções sejam construídas como conceitos de moda, uma espécie de *fait-divers* do jornalismo de ocasião" (*Interinvenções* 61).

The substitution of real lived experiences of nature, with, for example, the creation of zoos, has always been a case in point, where animals held captive are, on the one hand, part of the effort to preserve species, and, on the other, the zoos themselves are dependent upon a paying public willing to see the "exotic" animals, thus requiring a constant flux of new "inventory" in the form of animals removed from their natural habitat. Ty's uncle, back when there were still animals in the wild, made a living capturing elephants to populate such zoos. And when the biosphere collapses, Ty ends up being a caretaker for a rock star's private ego-zoo of sickly, "unglamorous" animals that "only a mother could love" (FOE 15) which exists purely for stroking the rock star's ego: "Isn't that selfless and cool and brave?" (FOE 15). The idea of nature preservation serves to enhance the rock star's market value and self-delusional importance which Boyle pokes fun at for the duration of the novel.

Soper also reveals another philosophical bind: the supposed value that is given to 'nature' in environmental discourse as something to be preserved and cherished may not, in fact, be independent of human cultural impact. Nor the assumption that what is natural is necessarily 'good and pure', at least from the human standpoint. The man-eating lion is a case in point in both *A Confissão da Leoa* and *A Friend of the Earth*, where the lions are doing exactly what lions do:

killing for food, with all the grim consequences this has for the characters in the novel. So, too, is the difficulty of living "au natural", which is comically exploited in *A Friend of the Earth* when the jail cell is portrayed as a kind of zoo for humans: the eco-warrior Ty revels in the creature comforts he enjoys while in jail: 'caged', as opposed to the huge amount of suffering he underwent when doing a 'back to Eden' publicity stunt and living off of the land for a month, nearly starving to death in the process. Living 'in nature' is almost impossible for a city-dwelling human who does not have enough knowledge of how to survive "in" nature to actually do so. As Harold Fromm laconically and aptly remarks, "Western man does not generally live in fear of Nature, except when earthquakes or cancer strike, for he is mostly unaware of a connection with Nature that has been artfully concealed by modern technology" (Fromm 32). At the end of *A Friend of the Earth*, Ty goes about rebuilding a mountain cabin that has been left to decay, taken over by nature: "It's almost like being in the wilderness all over again. Up with the sun, to bed at nightfall, no thought for anything but making a life, minute by minute, hour by hour" (FOE 347). They "crush carpenter ants, battle wasps, chase mice and birds and bats back out into the wild, where they belong" (FOE 348). Nature, for Boyle's California homeowner, is something that belongs but must be driven outside, and it is a fact that even eco-warrior Ty comes to admit at the end of the novel.

As Soper notes "In our own time the human impact on the environment has been so extensive that there is an important sense in which it is correct to speak of 'nature' as itself a cultural product or construction" (Soper 124). Alma's work as a conservationist in *When the Killing's Done* sanctions her to kill any species deemed "invasive". The linguistic construct that helps her perform this act, as a protector of the 'native' species, does not completely convince her that she is doing the right thing: killing, after all, is killing: "a killer in the service of something higher, of restoration, redemption, salvation, but a killer all the same" (WTKD 236). The invasive species are themselves animals introduced by humans (either accidentally, as is the case of the rats and snakes from ships, or deliberately, as is the case of domesticated animals such as sheep and pigs) who have in turn affected the fragile island ecosystems. But when raccoons are found on the island (deliberately and

secretly brought there by the "environmentalist" who removed them from his yard because they were making holes in his lawn) the consensus is that they have a right to be there since they apparently made the swim there on their own, through their own agency. Boyle's work takes up the underlying definition of what a 'native' is: just how far back in time does one have to go to be considered a 'native' species? What circumstances give one the right to life on a piece of land? The occupation of land and the struggle for ownership is a recurring theme in Boyle's novels, and is a topic that is examined in more detail in Chapter four.

At the extreme end, nature, too, is defined by change perceived as absence. Boyle's apocalyptic collapse of the biosphere in *A Friend of the Earth* follows from current scientific and popular thinking that climate change is a direct result of human intervention, namely, ozone depleting gases, pollution in general and overpopulation, rather than as a part of a series of natural warming and cooling cycles of the earth and where mass extinction of species has occurred 'naturally' more than six times since the first single-cell organisms were formed. The 'nature' of Boyle's future is defined by that which no longer is: its very absence, extinction, and destruction. Brutal nature, however, still exists: in the form of extreme weather, too many junk catfish and "the mucosa:" a deadly human virus. 'Nature' is now a construct brought indoors where food is produced in greenhouses and human life is prolonged, allowing for the creation of the "young-old" which challenge the natural process of aging and death.

The Idea of Nature

To better understand how the idea of nature is constructed and used in modern times, Soper identifies three distinct discourses: the metaphysical, the realist and the lay. The *metaphysical* notion invokes the concept through which humans consider themselves different from non-humans, of culture on the one side (represented by human actions) and nature on the other (represented by forces outside human influence). The *realist* concept refers to the "structures, processes and causal powers that are constantly operative within the physical world. (...) they are processes that we can neither escape nor destroy" (Soper 125). This refers to such things as the weather, volcanoes, and

the aging process. The *lay* concept of nature, used in everyday and literary and theoretical discourse refers to the observable world and is found *in opposition to* the urban or industrial, the "nature we have destroyed and polluted and are asked to conserve and preserve" (Soper 125).

How, then, do these varying concepts of nature and culture affect the reading and understanding of literature of the sort that Couto and Boyle produce? While Boyle's notions of nature involve more frequently the 'realist' and 'lay' versions, Couto's idea of nature escapes all these notions, and introduces a much lacking fourth sense of nature, in which human actions intermingle and interact with these same 'supra-natural' forces. The apparent inability to see human and nature as interconnected has led to such literary categories as "magic realism", where forces are at work that cannot be explained using empirical methods, thus they are neither from nature nor culture, but something irreal, invented, fantastic, and magic. The notion that other beings have spirits, that the dead are among us, and that reality can be altered by some are concepts that both frighten and fascinate western societies, much in the same way natural forces do. These above or beyond natural forces imply that they themselves are somehow embedded in our empirical experience of nature, and that this experience is felt the same way by everyone everywhere, thus making it 'real'. But while many Westerners are taught to deny the existence of ghosts, the dead among the living and the spiritual life of animals, in many other cultures they are seen as part of 'nature' in its lay sense as defined by Soper above.

The problem of Speaking for Nature

The othering of nature that runs correlative to a description of it would best be challenged if elements of the natural world itself could speak. And what better way to question underlying assumptions about the root causes of a human-based environmental crisis than to involve 'nature' itself into the discourse, with the help of an experienced translator. In a Couto novel, the crisis most often explored is a consequence of human power struggle and what ensues: war and the aftermath of war, kleptocracy and a systematic elimination of everything deemed traditional or "backward", especially coming from pre-literate or oral cultures and characters, namely, the elders. Frequently, it

is they who serve as translators for nature, for the animals and natural forces at work. In *A Varanda do Frangipani,* old Nãozinha turns almost completely into the natural element of water every night as a way to forget her human state, her difficult past, her painful present: "Nesse estado em que me durmo estou dispensada de sonhar: a água não tem passado. Para o rio tudo é hoje, onda de passar sem nunca ter passado" (85). To explain why the earth refuses to open itself up to accept Mariano's corpse in *O Rio Chamado Tempo, Uma Casa Chamada Terra*, he explains, by way of a mysterious letter, "ideas de bicho:" "A terra, assim fechada, é assunto que lhe escapa a si, aos bichos, aos vivos. Porque não tem causa de suceder. Só tem motivo de acontecer" (RCT 195). The empirical mandate of cause and effect that should run the natural world is cast aside. Earth's agency, its 'reason' for refusing to open itself up is because "esta terra começou a morrer no momento em que começámos a querer ser outros, de outra existência, de outro lugar. Luar-do-Chão morreu quando os que a governam deixaram de a amar" (RCT 195). Humans speaking for nature as being *a part of nature* is very different from human *advocacy of nature,* which many characters in a Boyle novel are want to do. The difference lies in the perceptions of the idea of nature, which allow for a blurring of the border between what it means to be human and a part of nature. In attempting to erase or blur this line, Couto's works are more evocative of ecology's *deep fiction*, of interconnectedness than it is of "magic realism", which, in my opinion, misses its mark in revealing to his Western readership the radical epistemological shift that he is proposing.

Ecology in Literature

Probing the real reasons "why" has always been one of the fundamental precepts of the deep ecological movement and the reason it has been frequently deemed subversive, according to Niel Evernden in "Beyond Ecology." The main tenant of interrelatedness remains the most threatening idea to capitalist societies, which require objectification of nature: creating 'resources' out of plants, animals and the land itself. But, as Evernden enigmatically remarks "where do you draw the line between one creature and another?" (95). Ecology refers to "the study of biological interrelationships and the flow of energy through organisms and inorganic matter" (Buell, *The*

Future 13). Laurence Buell, borrowing usage from Gary Snyder, observes that, metaphorically speaking, ecological thinking can also be used to cover exchange and interconnection in "other realms" (13), thus providing a wealth of poetic imagery in the service of literature. Interconnectedness and interdependence are concepts requiring more elaborate ethical considerations, since it makes the ontological shift from seeing the world and all that is in it in terms of its "usefulness" and looking at it from a deep ecology perspective where each element/animal/species is just a part of a larger and extremely complex whole. Animism, which western culture frequently dismisses as backward, follows more appropriately into deep ecology thinking, where animals have spirits and are on equal ground with humans. Couto's frangipani in *A Varanda do Frangipani* is nothing if not a conduit to other realms and the pangolin a kind of spirit guide traveling between worlds, helping the main human characters. The lioness in *A Confissão da Leoa* is simultaneously animal *and* human, and houses both a live spirit and a dead one, the distinction between woman and animal no longer clear. We are introduced to that complex 'something else' which is frequently out of reach of the newly "westernized" human protagonists in Couto's novels, but not the animals and plants that inhabit it. Transcendent knowledge, the afterlife, the beyond is not accessible to most of the human characters, most especially those representing western ways of knowing such as the police investigator Izidine Naíta in *A Varanda do Frangipani*, and Couto works hard to expose just a bit of what is under the veil to them and, consequently, to his readership. Again, rather than label this kind of work "magic realism", I think Couto finds that the problem here is one of context and perspective: that so much more is out there than meets the eye or can be explained by logical cultural and scientific discourse. His protagonists often fight what is self-evident despite evidence to the contrary.

A Couto novel frequently passes beyond the mystery solved of a traditional storyline, the scientific method frustrated by other ways of being and of seeing. The investigator is frequently told that he is investigating the wrong crime (that of the death of the administrator): "O verdadeiro crime que está a ser cometido aqui é que estão a matar o antigamente" (VDF 59): what is being destroyed

is a way of being-in-the-world, the memory of which disappears as each elder passes away, and the stories of the oral tradition are lost.

It is, of course, a line of thinking that could easily be deemed "esoteric" and "magical" with a negative connotation. Thinking and looking beyond the merely superficial demands patience and hard work. Ecologists and environmentalists frequently defend that one of the primary problems we as a world face is that fact that, despite that growing number of literate people, knowledge of the "real facts" of science is not easily accessible to most people. The prevailing division between the humanities and the sciences attests to this fact, as Love argues in *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment.* While Boyle weighs in with works that address this particular lacuna in western knowledge, Couto bears down on us from another equally important ethical and spiritual angle of "other knowledges", addressing western realist arrogance with equally powerful storylines to challenge prevailing ideas about nature. This essentially ethical debate is argued by both: What gives one the right to say which way of thinking is more valid? While Boyle argues more pragmatically of the complexity of issues regarding environmental protection and its misfits, exploiters, and victims, Couto's position is more existential: the earth is literally and figuratively an explosive place (see the lightning in *A Varanda do Frangipani*) wandering on its own (in *Terra Sonâmbula*) and even disappearing all together, as happens in *O Último Voo do Flamango*. These sides elide, creating not a friction as such, but complement each other in the perspective of interconnectedness and a growing awareness of the characters themselves of this "other" world.

The overlying ecological metaphor of interconnectedness ties together environmental concerns with social responsibility, forcing the reader to look again and again at their own prejudices and assumptions, practices and habits. Boyle's more typically ironic works poke fun at western middle-class guilt and over-seriousness, exposing the hypocrisy in some of his characters' clumsy, if well-meaning, environmental intentions, as is the case, for example, of the main character Ty in *A Friend of the Earth* when he commits acts of ecoterrorism which cause a forest fire; the biologist Alma in *When the Killing's Done* when she authorizes the killing of pigs and rats

only to find herself unable to terminate her own pregnancy; and in the case of the environmental writer Delaney, in *The Tortilla Curtain*, writing essays on the great outdoors while ensconced inside his comfortable suburban home with the air conditioner on and the blinds down.

Nature in Realist Fiction and Magic Realism

While Boyle's literary mode is more aligned to that of realist fiction, building from a scientific environmentalist's sensibility and vocabulary, Couto's literary imagination works the spaces between the "real" world and the perceived one, and the play between the scientific absolutism and the unknown. Boyle's earth is one that has been commodified and "othered", the characters alienated from any true communion with the earth, save rare moments. Couto's earth is more aligned to ecological manifests, as one of revelation and belonging, the characters placed in a greater context from which they can take comfort in the aftermath of war and displacement. Izidine passes into the afterlife with the help of the frangipani and the pangolin in *A Varanda do Frangipani*; the presence of the man-eating lions reveal the social injustice against the Kulumani women in *A Confissão da Leoa*; the earth itself refuses to open up in order to bury the dead in *Um Rio Chamado Tempo, Uma Casa Chamada Terra*; and in *Terra Sonâmbula*, it is the trees and earth that have gained moving autonomy, indifferent to the destruction left by the war.

This redefinition of the world existing between dream and reality is characteristic of works of fiction from South America and Africa, where it has been argued that the process of nationhood, of reconstructing a national literature after colonial rule, must necessarily involve a rejection of the realism/rationalization inherent in the European canons of the colonial period: "Gilberto Matusse considera que através da representação do real e do invisível, da sua interacção constante, a narrativa moçambicana está a ponto de libertar da tutela europeia" (Afonso 349). As Afonso affirms in *O Conto Moçambicano*, the real and the supernatural enjoy an easy co-habitation in Africa and the living and the dead form a natural and continuous bond. African readers are not confused by the intermingling of the natural with the supernatural in the way a Western readership might be (350). Couto, in an interview given to Matusse, explains that, for Mozambican writers, the

world of myths, ghosts and beliefs constitute part of what makes Mozambican writing unique, and that by using these ideas one can combat ignorance while still maintaining cultural individuality:

> "Há uma certa pressa em qualificar tudo isto como sendo obscurantismo e calcular que, num futuro próximo, toda a gente pensará segundo padrões racionalistas de acordo com os moldes europeus do chamado sentido prático da realidade. Eu penso que o nosso combate contra a ignorância possa ser feito sem esmagar a individualidade da nossa cultura" (Matusse 186).

By labeling Couto's novels under the umbrella of "magic realism," the critical stance inherent in much literary theory of the incompatability of oppositional systems of thought is clearly revealed, as Stephen Slemon elaborates in "Magic Realism as Post-Colonial Discourse:"

> "In the language of narration in a magic realist text, a battle between two oppositional systems takes place, each working towards the creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other. Since the ground rules of each remains suspended, locked in a continuous dialectic with the "other," a situation which creates disjunction within each of the separate discursive systems, rendering them with gaps, absences, and silences" (10-11).

The "battle" between the dialectical opposites typically finds no resolution, but the label of magic realism fiction is useful for its identification with the margin, literatures "situated at the fringes of mainstream literary traditions" (Slemon 9). Magic realism was originally coined in 1925 by Franz Roh to express a type of post-expressionist art and was later taken up to identify major periods in Latin-American and Caribbean literature, used as a kind of marker for works that are "resistant to massive imperial centre and totalizing systems" (Slemon 10) coming from the necessity of differentiation, the "nomeação de espaços e de uma lógica que se contrapõem à racionalidade da visão do mundo européia" (Fonseca and Cury 121). Maria Afonso notes that the use of magic realism in Africa is particularly strong due to the strength of myth in everyday life that is rooted in ancient tradition (Afonso 365). She also notes that the "reabilitação das crenças primitivas" (Afonso 365) in no way reflects an escape from realty, but is instead an instrument used to criticize abuses of the power structures in both colonial and post-colonial times. Angolan writer Pepetela's

terminology "realismo animista"[10] perhaps more nearly expresses Couto's own work, although still emphasizing the binary tensions that exist between the spiritual/animal and the real. Other denominators, which attempt to differentiate the Portuguese vein of magic realism, are "real sobrenatural," a coinage by José Saramago and "etno-fantástico" by João de Melo. Portuguese and Latino-American magic realism share important parallels (such as the presence of ghosts, wars, and social upheaval) but differ in their origins and in their particular expression[11].

Among the many narrative uses of "magic realism," it can serve to pyschologically couch difficult and painful ideas within a framework of distancing elements, as when, for example, the protagonist Mariamar in *A Confissão da Leoa* is given lucidity and clarity of thought, as expressed in her journals. That she is a victim of sexual and physical abuse is hinted at and finally revealed in the end, where her 'real' identity is that she has lost her mind by thinking herself a powerful lioness, capable of instilling fear in the village that has entrapped her. Insanity becomes the "logical" state for several characters, for whom facing their brutal 'reality' would otherwise be unbearable:

> "O realismo mágico pode ser concebido na escrita de Mia Couto como uma tensão subtil, mas constante, entre o abondono ao mundo, tal como ele se encontra em face do escritor, e uma clara vontade construtiva na sua relação com ele. Não se trata, porém, de uma construção forçando a inspiração. De facto, tudo aparece como um pequeno milagre literário, onde os elementos narrativos se interpenetram para criar uma atmosfera mágica" (Afonso 367-8).

Similarly, resorting to mystical origins is typically used as a way to covertly criticize abuse of power and social inequalities, as Afonso states here:

> "...esta reabilitação das crenças primitivas não implica uma fuga à realidadade. Pelo contrário, é nos continentes do Sul um instrumento particularmente apto a criticar os abusos, respeitantes tanto ao domínio colonial como à sociedade pós-colonial" (Afonso 365).

[10] A phrase he coined in *Lueji, O Nascimento de um Império*.

[11] Isabel Branco, in her Master's Thesis "A Recepção do Realismo Mágico na Literatura Portuguesa Contemporânea" identifies several sources for a particularly Portuguese mode of magic realism: "João do Melho considera que esse "etno-fantástico" tem simultaneamente origem nas tradições fantásticas portuguesas e na religião católica" (10). And "Eduardo Lourenço admite que a cultura portuguesa está desde sempre mais ligada à fantasia e ao fantástico do que ao realismo, fazendo referência à hagiografia, à alegoria e à literatura cavaleiresca e concluindo que o realismo e o «olhar frio, à Kafka», constituíram uma excepção" (31).

In Couto's *A Chuva Pasmada*, environmental abuse is uncovered by the magical and "impossible" parable of raindrops that suddenly stay suspended in the air, a consequence of the pollution produced by a nearby factory.

In contrast, Boyle's nightmarish vision of the future of California shows only the hope that nature will find a way to go on: it is the realistic response to the collapse of the biosphere, where some live, some die, and the only mandate is to survive it all for as long as one can, in any way one can manage. The reality of his daughter's tragic death mirrors the death of the earth and Ty's lifelong depression. There is no place to run and hide, no afterlife to gain comfort from, no promise of reuniting with the beloved dead. Richard Kerridge, in his essay "Ecothrillers: Environmental Cliffhangers" asks the question: Why has literature – the realist novel in particular – been so slow to respond to environmentalism?" (Kerridge 242). Quoting David Harvey, a postmodernist geographer, he believes it is because "to an unsettling degree environmentalism asks us to take into account the possible long-term results of present actions" (Kerridge 243). Environmentalism forces one to step out of and away from the small, short life of a human – the center of a realist novel – and to attempt to envision a far reaching future in which one is no longer present, in effect facing one's own death and insignificance.

Nature vs. Technology

In American culture, nature is often viewed as the antithesis to technology (Turner 45), a phenomenon explained by Leo Marx in his seminal work "The Machine in the Garden". But this binomial status perhaps allows for a too easy dichotomy of opposites: Nature representing the wild, the good, the true, the pure, and the unpolluted, while Culture represents technology, control, creativity, and function. Deep ecological trends, along with scientific discourse itself have, however, been moving away from this dualism and towards more complex and interrelated concepts such as quantum mechanics and even chaos theory (Howarth 78). The perceived need to pit the one against the other has its origins, according to Howarth, in the juxtaposition between Puritanism and a notion of the frontier. From puritanism, he postulates, comes the idea of extremes, with no middle

terms allowed, the utilitarian obsession with use and practical need driving all things against any aesthetic considerations (art for art's sake, or in this case, nature for nature's sake). The frontier mentality called for "the rough individualism able to forsake the soft, corrupting and emasculating sophistication of 'civilization'" (Turner 45). Delaney, the nature writer in *The Tortilla Curtain,* makes a living by exploiting the late capitalist need to preserve something of this last frontier, in a part of the country where little or no frontiers exist and where nature is confined to the "useless" land between highways. The extreme separation between the two worlds, exemplified by the lives of the two couples (the American middle-class suburbanites and the Mexican worker immigrants) figures into the American schematic of this typical dualism. But, as Turner points out, if nature is in fact the opposite of society, then the natural man is essentially asocial, or even anti-social, a concept used to justify the sturdy individualism so valued in American capitalist society. As many of the characters in Boyle's novels testify, nature is tolerated as long as it is an aesthetic and aestheticized experience: a lawn free of raccoons (LaJoy traps and relocates them in *When the Killing's Done*) the the 'invasive species' eliminated (rats and pigs) and the weather tamed (climate controlled homes and car stereos which can emit the sounds of nature). Even the separate lives of the two couples can be viewed in this light: for Delaney, the car – the ultimate symbol of technological control – brings him into contact with Cándido, by accidentally hitting him. Delany takes a walk in the National Park and is aware that, out here in "the wild" he was vulnerable: not to an animal attack, but to being preyed upon by other humans: "transients, bums, criminals, and there was no law here"(117). After pregnant América is raped, she sees a coyote: The car and the homes keep 'wild nature' outside for the American couple, while the Mexicans immigrants live in the valley, and are subject to that same fearful nature. At one point, even Cándido observes the beautiful scenery as "dead as a photograph", the beautiful nature reserve he is occupying a "jail cell and he was a prisoner, incarcerated in his thoughts" (TTC 51-52). Beautiful indeed, if only he were not starving, jobless, and homeless. For enjoying nature is only contingent upon being able to keep the wild parts of it at bay: the storms, the fires, (wild) animals and even other humans. The romantic vision of nature

Delaney himself helps to propagate with the nature articles he writes reflect a longing for contact made possible by his very alienation from nature. His need to control this view of nature is ambivalent, as he muses on the right of the coyote to hunt in areas that have been invaded by the sprawling suburbs, eating pets and even human babies left unattended. The lives of the coyotes parallel that of Cándido and América as representative of the 'illegal' immigrant population living on the margins of the suburban world. The gates are the technological solution in an effort to keep nature at bay: both wild nature (as Delaney sees it) as well as wild human nature (as perceived by the homeowners of the affluent community): "but nature was the least of their problems. It was humans they were worried about. The Salvadorans, the Mexicans, the blacks, the gangbangers and the taggers and the carjackers they read about in the Metro section over their brand toast and coffee" (TTC 40). Boyle is quick to point out that this fear of nature, of the 'other' is often based on lack of true knowledge and contact with the objects one fears. The media creates the concepts of by which these fears are exacerbated and manifested.

While Boyle explores the construction of the *idea of nature* through the filter of the technological achievements in the developed world, in a Couto novel, technology is subjugated and mitigated in the aftermath of war, serving as a tenuous shield against the onslaught of nature. A burnt-out bus becomes a haunting ersatz shelter in *Terra Sonâmbula*, as does a shipwrecked cargo boat. Technology after the apocalypse, Couto's novels are almost completely devoid of functioning modern machinery, their rural settings more or less completely dominated by weather and the seasons. In *Um Rio Chamada Tempo, Uma Casa Chamada Terra*, technology becomes a symbol of the abuse of power when the boat that connects the island to the city sinks because the greed of its occult owners allowed it to operate with an excess of passengers and lack of maintenance.

The Traditional vs. the Modern, Orality vs. Literacy

As previously noted, Couto is clear of his condemnation of the romanticism of African literature and the ease with which critics may label African literature or culture as "traditional" and therefore "pure" or at least worth defending. And while African literatures frequently address this

idea of the natural and traditional as opposed to the modern and the technological, Couto does not think that Africans are necessarily more superstitious but that being so is part of human nature in general, one which abdication of free will: "Não fazem parte da chamada natureza exótica dos africanos. Fazem parte da natureza da pessoa humana. (…) A crença na chamada "boa sorte" faz com que nos demitamos da nossa responsabilidade individual e colectiva" (Couto, *Interinvenções* 92). While positioning himself as an advocate of the mission of social responsibility, he nevertheless enjoys the aesthetic possibilities that exploring mystical powers allows in the plot of a novel set in Mozambique, where a large part of the population believe in witchcraft, curses, blessings and other mystical states, part of a legacy of understanding that owes its strength from orality.

In an essay entitled "Quebrar Armadilhas", Couto seeks to create more solidarity by identifying some of the dualistic traps which serve as a barriers: favoring reality over transcendence, individual identity over identification with others, the logic of writing over the logic of orality: "(…) a ideia de leitura aplica-se a um vasto universo (...) Queixamo-nos de que as pessoas não lêem livros. Mas o deficit de leitura é muito mais geral. Não sabemos ler o mundo, não lemos os outros" (Couto, *Interinvenções* 109). These dualities are often in conflict in the novels. In *A Varanda do Frangipani*, the inspector is given this lesson throughout the book, where his investigative techniques are insufficient in understanding the "why" of the crime, even to know what the crime itself is. In *Um Rio Chamado Tempo, Uma Casa Chamada Terra* the dead grandfather Mariano communicates with his grandson through texts that impossibly and mysteriously appear, revealing important information about his family and himself. The apparent ignorance of how things work "in here" (in the country) is opposed to the life of the outsider (an urbanite).

The linguistic dualisms explored in Boyle's novels explore similar conflicts of ways of seeing the world vis-a-vis nature, when he positions the unlearned lumberjacks against the well-read environmentalists in *A Friend of the Earth*: In the eyes of the recently radicalized Ty, the

lumberjacks represent the ignorant masses "earning their paycheck" at the expense of the environment, who view environmentalist as "Green Niggers," and that the organization Earth First! is a “front for Bolshevik terrorists with homosexual tendencies" (FOE 40). The conflict between an animal lover who finds a seal on the beach and Alma in *When the Killing's Done* reveals a similar class conflict divided along the lines of book learning: Alma is the highly trained biologist whose scientific knowledge she feels gives her the 'authority' to act above any other emotional considerations: "Even now with a twinge of embarrassment, she remembers the answer she'd offered up: "I'm a scientist" (WTKD 108).

Boyle's call for environmental literacy is clear, but he is careful not to give too much authority to the scientists. Rita, who breed sheep for food on the island before it became a park, suffers profoundly from the useless death of the slaughtered lambs: "That was a kind of heartbreak that jumped species, from *Ovis aries to Homo sapiens*, and here it was again, seventy-three ewes come back to bleat for the lambs that couldn't answer, and the ravens laughing from the trees" (WTKD 172). Working everyday with the animals, she exhibits more compassion for their plight than does the self-proclaimed animal-lover LaJoy or even the cerebral biologist Alma, who (rightly) places value on animal diversity, the right of the underdog (under-species) to survive. Both ways of thinking about environmental issues are vital – and not necessarily as mutually exclusive – as dualistic thinking would imply.

The Young, The Old, and Ideas of Nature

Yet another prevalent dualism surrounding the construction of an idea of nature is that of the young and the old. In Couto's work, the old are the keepers of the traditional oral knowledge, while the young are open to new ideas, oftentimes riding the borderland between literacy and modernity on the one hand and respect for tradition and older ways of knowing on the other. They represent the hope of reconciliation in a post-war era, and the need to understand and to translate one way of thinking to another, often seen as detectives looking for answers: Muidinga searches for his lost parents; Kindzu for his brother; Mariano for the mysteries surrounding his family tree; Naizine for

the murderer of Vasto Excelêncio. As the characters progress throughout the stories, 'truths' about nature are revealed by the old, the dying, and the dead. "O ancião, depositário da memória da tribo e da sabedoria africana, lembrando os mitos fundadores, medita sobre questões que dizem respeito à dignidade humana" (Afonso 375).

In *A Friend of the Earth*, Ty is the embodiment of the genetically engineered "young-old:" the old who can afford to replace failing body parts with new ones created in a laboratory. As the story flips back and forth between the Young Ty and the Young-old Ty, the reader is simultaneously confronted with the earth of today and the post-apocalypse future, where the young are, for the most part, unaware of how life was before. But Ty's lament is that of change on all levels, wanting "the world the way it was, my daughter restored to me, my parents, all the doomed and extinguished wildlife of America. (...) I don't want to live in this time. I want to live in the past. The distant past" (FOE 330). The earth's decay parallels Ty's own aging process. The passing of the torch, so to speak, is aborted when his daughter falls to her death, so that the possibility of living on through her is no longer possible.

As Afonso points out, the African author typically shows the transmission of African values as is traditionally passed down from grandparents to grandchildren: "O autor estabelece laços de profunda solidariedade entre os velhos e as crianças. Estas devem criar um mundo novo, fundado sobre os valores africanos que aprendem com os avós" (Afonso 376). But as Couto cautions, the need to question the traditional is also an important process, which the young must examine using a critical eye. This is especially evident in *A Confissão da Leoa*, where the 'tradition' of the oppression of women is challenged using nature and the supernatural as methods for unraveling the 'nature' of the town's affliction.

Boyle's most remarkable youth is Ty's daughter, Sierra, in *A Friend of the Earth* who lives a tree for three years[12] as a form of protective protest, eventually becoming completely disconnected to her human life: "She became airier, more distant. She'd been studying the teachings

[12] Sierra is most likely based on environmental activist Julia 'Butterfly' Hill, whose 738-day tree-sitting stint was supported by Earth First! among other organizations described in her book *The Legacy of Luna.*

of Lao Tzu and the Buddha, she told me. She was one with Artemis, one with the squirrels and chickadees that were her companions. There was no need to come down to earth, not then, not ever" (FOE 333). As she becomes a martyr for the environmental cause, the true nature of her martyrdom is revealed as having no impact on the "saving" of the environment, the collapse of which is inevitable from the start of the novel. The main difference in environmental conscience lies in the idea of responsibility, which is a burden of older generations: to what extent is one personally responsible for the destruction of the earth? Sierra, in taking to heart the environmental values taught her by her elders becomes an extremist and sacrifices her life as a socialized human, and Ty's inadvertent role in his own daughter's death weighs heavily on his aging conscience. The tension described is that between choosing a spiritual life and “coming down to earth.” Boyle plays with this phrase, which means both “to get real” and “be practical” as well as referring to her very real separation from the earth while living in the tree, not to mention the fall to her death.

Conclusions

Understanding how the concept of nature is constructed and how it is portrayed in these novels is important in understanding the various ways of being in the world that both Couto and Boyle envision. Coming from different literary styles, histories, and continents, these authors reveal that the ideas of nature are couched in belief systems incumbent in each society, and that the variety of ideas of nature tend to organize along familiar oppositional and dualistic lines of thought. And while Boyle's work speaks of popular western understandings of environmental issues, Couto's "deep fiction" creates less of a divide between that which is human and that which is animal, plant, and spirit.

Chapter Three: Language, Humor, and the 'Environment'

> "I'm not preaching. I'm not going to preach. It's too late for that, and besides which, preaching never did anybody any good anyway. Let me say this, though, for the record..." (*A Friend of the Earth* 54).

Ursula LeGuin, in her essay "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction" muses anthropologically upon what may have been the origins of the narrative, where the exciting story of the hunt – the hunter-hero – climaxes with the death of the prey. She feels that, as a woman, she is alienated from this form of narrative and chooses instead to nominate the novel as a kind of "carrier bag of fiction," where "instead of heros they have people in them" and instead of following "Time's-(killing)-arrow mode" it would offer up a "realistic one" where "the novel is a medicine bundle, holding things in a particular, powerful relation to one another and to us" (153-154).

Equating the telling of a narrative as a tool of healing is a concept that Couto also embraces, and in which reading and thinking are part of the curative process, "to think" meaning "to cure" or "take care of" a wound:

> Temos de repensar o mundo no sentido terapêutico de o salvar de doenças de que padece. Uma das prescrições médicas é mantermos a habilidade da transcendência, recusando ficar pelo que é imediatamente perceptível" (Couto, *Interinvenções* 105-106).

The narrative process is thus a healing one if there is thinking involved. In "The Comic Mode" from *The Comedy of Survival*, Meeker argues that the creation of literature is an important characteristic of being human – just as flight is to birds – and that it is important to see how literature influences our ideas about what it means to be human and about how to understand nature, but that its primary task is to imitate human actions: *mimesis* (155). Meeker posits that within the western literary tradition it is comedy – rather than tragedy – , which attends to positive (healthy) values of survival and is concerned with "muddling through, not with progress or perfection" (160).

Literary comedy, then, shows a loss of equilibrium and its consequent recovery (Meeker 159). It is a story of the return to normalcy, where biological imperatives take precedence over moral ideals or idealistic ethics. The comic hero has small victories "where only small victories are possible" and the comedy ends up being a "celebration, a ritual of renewal of biological welfare" (Meeker 159). Like Tyrone Tierwater, at the end of *A Friend of the Earth,* living in a ruined house in the middle of a downed forest, but finally coming to terms with his life finally says, in a state of grace, "I'm a human being" (349). The final acceptance of the state of things, chaotic as they are, is what in effect makes him so characteristically human: his ability to move into any given environment and "dominate the scene" (Meeker 161). Ecologist call animals and plants that are able to quickly populate and adapt to new ecosystems "pioneers" because they are the first to occupy land that would be hostile to other species, such as after a fire or volcano or after construction of a building. But as Meeker notes:

> "Many of the species that men find objectionable – the 'weeds,' 'trash fish' and 'nuisance' mammals and birds – are pioneering or invading species whose life styles resemble behavior that men have admired most when they have seen it in other men. We celebrate the qualities in human pioneers that we despise in the pioneers of other plant and animal species" (161).

Definitions of what is "native" and "intrusive" in regards to species is deceptive and elusive, as Boyle explores in *The Tortilla Curtain, When the Killing's Done,* and *A Friend of the Earth.* The definition of 'native' is clearly confusing when one considers that California was taken from Mexico as a spoil of war and that Delaney's parents originally came from Ireland, he himself coming from "back east" and not a native of California. In *When the Killing's Done*, the inevitability of human influence on the environment puts into question the killing of intruder species (rats and pigs) that have adapted to new island environments. In the apocalyptic future of *A Friend of the Earth* the only fish left to eat are the ever-resistant and disgusting carp. The carp, like the humans, are populating the earth in every growing numbers, crowding out other species in the process.

Humans as a pioneer species, Meeker contends, do not know what it means to live in a climax ecosystem: the "pioneer's faith" rarely including the prerogatives of other species (162). This

driving spirit of conquest may be part of our biological imperative, but it is our human capacity to *choose* our behavior which Meeker believes has led more often to "wrong" decisions regarding our place in the world, which has led to the current environmental crisis: "How is it possible to recognize between ecological wisdom and ecological insanity?" (163).

The Pastoral Mode and Paradise

Depictions of nature in literature have, as an important literary tradition, the pastoral. But it is by no means the only tradition to praise natural environments: medieval trovadoresca poetry of southern Europe, the traditions of European Romantisicm and Naturism, and nationhood literature emerging from post-colonial Africa and Asia also place a large emphasis on nature. Greek Hesiod's *Works and Days* bespoke of a golden age of people who lived in harmony with nature, prior to the advent of *techne.* The literary pastoral tradition, as a genre, "posits a natural world, a green world to which sophisticated dwellers of court or city withdraw in search of the lessons of simplicity that only nature can teach" (Love 66). Love characterizes the scenes of regional country life as idealized, where nature is depicted as a noble and gentle and where life is simple and carefree, in direct contrast to the violent movement of the city and the world at large (Love 66). Implicit is the idea of human renewal: that exposure to the "simple life" gives rejuvenation to the stresses of the city, and by "going back to nature" one can come into contact with greater truths which exist beyond the cultured life of the city.

In 1964, Leo Marx wrote a definitive study of the American pastoral – *The Machine in the Garden* – in which he studies "the pattern of retreat and return in an age of environmental anxiety" (Love 69), where "modern invocations of pastoral – then nature – has been transformed from a model of certainty to one of uncertainty, tainted" (Love 84). In *A Varanda do Frangipani*, the urban investigator's "return" to the country is anything but idyllic. Everything is confusing: the rules of engagement are turned on their head and danger is everywhere, with lightning storms and land mines surrounding it. Its isolation serves as a cloister for traditions and knowledge that is dying with the aging people in their "fraqueleza" (a weak fort) as the dead soldier, Ermelindo, calls it:

"Esse mesmo monumento que os colonos queriam eternizar em belezas estava agora definhando. Minhas madeirinhas, aquelas que eu ajeitara, agoniavam podres, sem remédio contra o tempo e a maresia" (22). That the fortress is only accessible by air gives it even more of a Xanadu effect, its extreme isolation similar to that of a prison or an asylum. The inspector begins to question his prejudices:

> Quem sabe Marta tinha razão? Ele estudara na Europa, regressara a Moçambique anos depois da Independência. Esse afastamento limitava o seu conhecimento da cultura, das línguas, das pequenas coisas que figuram a alma de um povo (VDF 44).

The layers of time define the crimes being committed: a human lifetime, with the death of Vasto Excelêncio; the time after death with the memorializing of the dead, as is shown by the dead soldier; and a collective memory time comprising of the stories and knowledge that is dying along with the old people in the asylum. The pattern of retreat and return is also an anxiety of remembering: old age remembering an unromantic youth. Nãozinha, the self-proclaimed witch of the asylum, is loath to remember: "Minhas lembranças são custosas de chamar. Não me peça para desenterrar passados" (VDF 81).

In *Um Rio Chamado Tempo, Uma Casa Chamada Terra* the student Mariano returns to his island homeland after a time in the city. The whole country is perceived in terms of this dualism:

> “Nenhum país é tão pequeno como o nosso. Nele só existem dois lugares: a cidade e a Ilha. A separá-los, apenas um rio. Aquelas águas, porém, afastam mais que a sua própria distância. Entre um e outro lado reside um infinito. São duas nações, mais longínquas que planetas. Somos um povo, sim, mas de duas gentes, duas almas" (RCT 18).

The river itself has mythical connotations and is a kind of causeway between two realities: life and death, culture of the city with the nature of home. As is typical in a Couto novel, the reader is provided a "translator" who is given enlightenment as the story progresses. The return to his homeland is essential to its protection: he becomes the heir of both the physical family home as well

as the earth itself, a protectorate of place: "Porque essa casa sou eu mesmo" (RCT 249). Mariano contemplates the effect that communicating with his dead grandfather has had on his worldview:

> "As cartas instalava em mim o sentimento de estar transgredindo a minha humana condição. Os manuscritos de Mariano cumpriam o meu mais intenso sonho. Afinal, a maior aspiração do homem não é voar. É visitar o mundo dos mortos e regressar, vivo, ao território dos vivos" (RCT 257-258).

Mariano, the dead, writes his last letter to his grandson, who has become a kind of initiate into the secrets of how the world works:

> "Você, meu neto, cumpriu o ciclo das visitas. E visitou casa, terra, homem, rio: o mesmo ser, só diferindo em nome. Há um rio que nasce dentro de nós, corre por dentro da casa e desagua não no mar, mas na terra. Esse rio uns chamam de vida" (RCT 258).

An inability of the eternal return is the subtext of *A Friend of the Earth*, where there is no longer any 'nature' to return to, at least the idea of nature as wilderness and diversity of fauna. The pastoral "return" is necessarily a return in time, to the vigor of youth, to the sting of regret in hindsight. Ty's present predicament of environmental chaos echoes his feelings of guilt and regret at the death of his child, for which he feels directly responsible. "There is nothing I want, except the world the way it was" (FOE 330). It is the regret of having lost his daughter, a useless sacrifice in retrospect: "And what did you accomplish?" asks his former nemesis, the fire investigator, when he meets him years later in a burned out and destroyed forest, for which Ty was responsible:

> "This is it, the point we've been working toward, the point of it all, through how many years and how many losses I can't begin to count, and the answer is on my lips like a fleck of something so rank and acidic you just have to spit it out: "Nothing," I say. "Absolutely nothing" (FOE 343).

Boyle's particular dark humor takes up another frequent theme in pastoral literature: the return to Eden. Ty and Andrea do a publicity stunt to "make a statement". She wanted to reenact what her great-grandfather had done when he shed his clothes and went out into the Maine woods (A nod to Thoreau, a kind of patron saint to the environmental movement) to live off the land because "nature was to be preserved for its own sake as the nurturer of mankind" (FOE 219). The

two of them go into the woods with nothing on them and no food "but Tierwater was reminded of nothing so much as Raphael's depiction of the expulsion from paradise. But that wasn't right. It was paradise they were entering, wasn't it?" (FOE 221). It was, of course, no paradise: they were hungry and physically suffered from bites and the sun.

> "To go out into the wilderness with nothing, to hunt and gather and survive like the first hominids scouring the African plains, that was something, a fantasy that burned in the atavistic heart of every environmentalist" (FOE 223).

The romantic notion of the return to the wild is short lived. To survive, they had to exterminate protected species: they ate "protected golden trout" and "extinguished a whole colony of freshwater mussels" (FOE 233).

As Huggan and Tiffin have observed, aesthetic play is often used to reflect on weighty philosophical/ethical issues and the radical green movements have used play as part of their strategy for resistance (Huggan and Tiffin 49). For Boyle, preaching does not seem to work as well as shocking or scaring, or even making one laugh. Couto adopts a similar strategy in *A Varanda do Frangipani*, when the white Portuguese Xidimingo and the black Mozambican Nhonhoso squabble, evoking native and non-native stereotypes, persistent holdovers from colonial rule, made humorous by the context: they are at odds because they are playing a role that is expected of them.

> - Eu nos brancos não confio. Branco é como camaleão, nunca desenrola todo o rabo...
> - E vocês, pretos, vocês falam mal dos brancos mas a única coisa que querem é ser como eles...
> - Os brancos são como o piripiri: a gente sabe que comeu porque nos fica a arder a garganta.
> - A diferença entre mim e você é que, a mim, ficam cabelos no pente enquanto a você ficam pentes no cabelo (VDF 64).

The great friendship notwithstanding, they have differences in opinion in regards to "Xidimingo's frangipani" when Nhonhoso tries to cut down. For the Portuguese, the tree has primarily aesthetic value, "Toque também você, Nhonhoso, veja como faz bem ao seu corpo" (VDF 66). Xidimingo's

view of the tree (to be preserved as a thing of beauty) contrasts with what Nhonhoso believes is the nature of being a tree:

> "(O Branco) disse que nós, os pretos, não podíamos entender, nós não gostamos de árvores. Aí eu me zanguei: como não gostamos de árvores? Respeitamos como se fossem família.
> Vocês, brancos é que não sabem. Pois vou-lhe ensinar uma coisa que você não conhece" (VDF 69).

Nhonhoso tells of the "origem do antigamente", where at first there were only men and the gods felt that there were too many of them and that they were all the same. So they decided to transform some of the men into plants, others into animals, and even others into rocks: "Somos irmãos, árvores e bichos, bichos e homens, homens e pedras. Somos todos parentes saídos da mesma matéria" (VDF 69). The misunderstanding continued, however, and the Portuguese man points out that material ambition (vocês sonharem com grandes carros, grandes propriedades) is incompatible with the frugality of wanting to grow a single tree. "Os outros querem florestas, eu só quero uma arvorezita que eu possa cuidar, ver crescer, florir" (VDF 69-70).

Here, different worldviews are laid out and examined, where a tree's usefulness is viewed in terms of its aesthetic appeal, its usefulness (as a medicine) and as a point of ontological difference between the two men, but with humor alternating with the moments of serious contemplation. Like Boyle, Couto considers the flip side of paradise when Ximidingo says, "Nem Deus quer saber de pecado. A única coisa que Deus quer, sabe qual é? Ele quer é fugir do Paraíso. Pirar-se daquele asilo" (VDF 69). The expulsion from paradise marks the point from which man and 'nature' part ways, the defining moment of independence from the laws of the natural world. Equating it to where they find themselves – an asylum – a place where they are, in essence, 'trapped', is a typical reversal – oftentimes humorous – of which Couto is known. These, along with the creation of his particular neologisms, are

> “empenhado em fazer coexistir os sistemas culturais europeus e as ontologias indígenas, instituindo um imaginário cultural e linguístico entendido na tarefa de conhecer e modificar o mundo” (Afonso 384-385).

The Comic Mode of the Environment and its Saviors

Depictions of the environment are often made humorous simply by creating a subtext or intertextual reference that would (hopefully) be understood by the readership. During the rainstorm in *A Friend of the Earth*, the anxiety of not being able to escape (environmental) disaster is softened by the comic antics of the indulgent naiveté of the rock star, who decides to hole up for the duration of the storm and the *mucosa* scare (a deadly virus) playing on the word Mask/Masque as in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death." In Poe's telling, the wealthy attend a masque while the rest of the population dies the "red death" outside its walls. The story ends with death eventually reaching those who try to escape it, its reference (of the story) foreshadowing the rock star's demise.

Later, in the same vein, Ratchiss (humorously pronounced "rat kiss") the big game hunter turned armchair environmentalist explains the ease with which he changed his mind regarding wild animals:

> "You see, I started out loving animals – and, by extension, nature – then suddenly, I hated them and wanted to kill everything with claws and hoofs that moved across the horizon, and now I'm as committed a friend of the earth and the animals as you'd want to find" (FOE 164).

He explains how one can hate animals:

> "Ever think what our ancestors must have felt when Mummy was snapped up by a big croc while washing out her loincloth in the river? (...) Or, more to the point, the thousands of poor Africans taken by leopards every year" (FOE 164).

The romantic notion of the simplicity and beauty of animals is contrasted by the story of his sister's brutal mauling by a bear. Her tragic death is the direct result of the aestheticized vision of nature, which his city dwelling father had: he wanted to get a picture of his children on top of a bear. The theme-park aspect of the National Parks is also put into focus, while Ratchiss is criticized for his superficial commitment to the environmental cause.

The celebrity environmentalist is frequently the target of Boyle's ironic gaze. His main character, Ty, has suspect motives for joining the movement: to have sex ("Save the Earth and get laid too!" (FOE 82).) to assuage guilt ("Jewish guilt, Catholic guilt, enviro-eco-capitalist guilt...of course, guilt itself is a luxury" (FOE 135).), to ward off restlessness or even just to "settle a score." He dreams of following in the footsteps of other famous monkey-wrenchers and he revels in the near fame he attained while living in the woods: "they were saints of the Movement" (FOE 267).

Boyle's yuppie nature writer Delaney does most of his 'work' while sitting in his air-conditioned office with artificial lightning, shutting the outside out in order to write about nature. His column tells the romantic story of communion with nature, selling the illusion of being out in nature. He romanticizes the same coyotes that have eaten his dogs, equating their calls to the music of Mozart or Mendelssohn "lulled by the impassioned beauty of it" (TTC 82). Contrasting this 'made up night' in nature with that of the 'real night' out in nature that Cándido and América endure...where you "couldn't eat grass" (TTC 83). Boyle parodies the 'nature-lover', the readership whose interest in nature is hygienic: all danger, fear, and mess has been removed to produce nature-as-it-should-be. Alison Byerly in "The Uses of Landscape*"* analyzes how the National Park System is driven by an American idea of wilderness that is more picturesque than truly wild. The picturesque movement in the visual arts had been motivated, she believes, by the need to tame the wilderness, making it both "accessible and comprehensible" (Byerly 55). Wild nature, then, becomes a commodity: it is photographed and written about and printed up into magazines and books which bring the outdoors in and feed the environmental imagination. In *The Tortilla Curtain*, Nature magazines entertain the white-collar criminal under house arrest, since he cannot go outside. The "environment," in the grim future of *A Friend of the Earth* is passé, "And nobody wants to read about it – nobody wants to hear about it" (TTC 282).

Wild nature and picturesque nature are what each couple inhabits separately, with Cándido and América living outside for want of a house and Delaney writing about the outdoors from the comfort of his office. Vulnerable América is raped and it is Delaney who feels "violated" when his

car is stolen. And immediately following a chapter describing the extreme poverty and hardships that Cándido and América undergo, Delaney's minor ordeals are viewed ironically as "things had been tough there for a while" (TTC 188). As the American couple muddle through in the comic tradition described by Meeker, the Mexican couple suffer a tragic ending: the harsh chemicals América worked with and the lack of prenatal care most likely contributing to her daughter's blindness, ending in the landslide taking her life.

The hunter-hero turns savior-hero in the vein of St. Francis of Assis, who Lynn White Jr. identifies as the "greatest radical in Christian history since Christ" (White 13) and who is best understood for his virtue of species humility. Statues of St. Francis show him surrounded by sheep and other animals, in recognition of his doctrine of communion with animals. Anise, in *When the Killing's Done*, does her best to protect the newborn lambs from the ravens, here not the friendly birds of St. Francis legend, but the carrion crows going about their business on the food chain:

> "She found (Anise) crouched in the beaten grass with the lambs all gathered to her, the hair strung dripping across her face, her shoulders quaking and her clothes wet through with the rain and the blood" (WTKD 170).

Boyle's grim humor comes through Anise's pose as St. Francis in reverse, where nature shows its bloody tooth and claw. Ty Tierwater in *A Friend of the Earth* also envisions himself as a holy warrior, working against the capitalist machine of the exploitation of nature (such as the logging companies and the power company) but also against the hypocrisy of the environmentalist movement itself "what was environmentalism but just another career?" (FOE 302). No longer called an eco-warrior, he is now labeled an "eco-nut" by his own kind and the guerrilla tactics that had given them protagonism was now prejudicial to the cause. Like St. Francis, he becomes the radical outsider, although his daughter Sierra becomes the true martyr to the environmental cause. Her accidental fall occurs as she occupies an old growth redwood – the largest trees in the world – to protect it from loggers. Her saint-like demeanor is accentuated by her distancing from human life. After three years,

> "Sierra had begun to take on the trappings of the mad saint, the anchorite in her cell, the martyr who suffers not so much for a cause but for the sake of the suffering itself. She became airier, more distant. She'd been studying the teachings of Lao Tzu and the Buddha, she told me. She was one with Aretemis, one with the squirrels and the chickadees that were her companions. (...) Toward the end, I think, she'd forgotten what she was doing up there in that tree to begin with" (FOE 333).

Her peaceful protest contrasts with the destructive and violent drive of her father, whose need to "save the earth" was more of a personal acting out rather than any altruistic humility as embodied in St. Francis. "Tierwater understood that he didn't care, not about the press or the organization or the trees or anything else: all he cared about now was destruction" (FOE 171).

The absurd and the environment

Terra Sonâmbula – the sleepwalking land – refers to a country in the throws of war. Sleepwalking is the force of moving without conscience, at the same time evoking a dream state, which allows for the suspension of belief and the weight of reality. Going through the motions of living – looking for food, shelter, a place to call home, people to love – during wartime in Mozambique contrasts starkly with the themes of "white flight" and guilt which surround Boyle's novels under analysis. What they do share, however, are aspects of the absurd, particularly when one looks at the ways in which humor is used to ironic effect. The stark, war-torn landscape of *Terra Sonâmbula* is reminiscent of Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*, where two characters (Vladimir and Estragon) wait at the side of a road beneath a leafless tree for someone named Godot. The tree plays silent and sad witness to the absurdist conversations of the two main characters. In *Terra Sonâmbula*, the two characters seek refuge in a burned out bus filled with the charred remains of the dead. It is the last place one would normally find comfort and refuge, but which Tuahir logically concludes is a safe place since "O que já está queimado não volta a arder" (TS 13). The sleepwalking land describes not only the state of mind of the two travelers looking for missing parents (millions of children were orphaned during the civil war in Mozambique) but also nature

itself, as it seems to move of its own volition. It is a postcolonial parable, where Kindzu describes both his own childhood and that of the nation itself:

> "E assim seguia nossa criancice, tempos afora. Nesses anos ainda tudo tinha sentido: a razão deste mundo estava num outro mundo inexplicável. Os mais velhos faziam a ponte entre esses dois mundos" (TS 21).

From his father's dreams came the announcement of the independence of the nation. "Nessa altura, nós nem sabíamos o verdadeiro significado daquele anúncio" (TS 21). Soon, the war arrived to his village and reality hit: "o sangue foi enchendo nossos medos. A guerra é uma cobra que usa os nossos próprios dentes para nos morder" (TS 22). Dreams/ideas becoming reality, Kindzu's brother is removed to the chicken coop, becoming a chicken "alma e corpo" to escape conscription because "Galinha era bicho que não despertava brutais crueldades" (TS 24). Convinced that the only way to save the boy born on independence day, (he is given the name Vinticinco de Junho, a symbolic child of the revolution) was to hide him using a disguise, turning him from a human into something animal. He can no longer speak and even acts the part of the animal in its entirety until one day he disappears altogether, just as hope does, from his improbable prison.

The entirely absurd situation is no longer absurd. The child/young nation is at the mercy of those who had "perdido seus privilégios" during the colonial rule. Imagining the boy/chicken escaping, murdered or let loose, he was nonetheless gone and the family/nation disintegrated as a result. Couto reveals one of the principal features of the human species: its capacity for ritual cruelty heightened during the war. Escape only becomes possible by posing as an animal and losing contact with the human world, a relationship explored further in Chapter 5.

For Meeker, the "absurd" describes the assumptions of human superiority over all over creatures, and human tragedy presumes a belief in a caring universe. Comedy, on the other hand, takes a more existential view, where "the world has never cared about man, nature has never shown itself to be inferior" (Meeker 167). It is the 'comic spirit', which identifies humans with nature and maintains that life as the most important force there is:

> "When the existence of many species, including the human, and the continuity of the biological environment are threatened as they are now, mankind can no longer afford the wasteful and destructive luxuries of a tragic view of life" (Meeker 167).

The tragic view, which has warfare as its primary metaphor, works under the force of opposites (good/evil, man/nature, truth/falsehood) while the comic view uses game and play, love and courtship as metaphors. Just as ecology calls for concepts of balance, interdependence, and complexity, comedy calls for humility and acceptance, requiring humans to change themselves rather than their environment.

Chapter Four: A Journey Across the Bordered Land

> "Where do you draw the line between one creature and another? Where does one organism stop and another begin? Is there even a boundary between you and the non-living world, or will the atoms in this page be a part of your body tomorrow?" (Evernden 95).

Some years ago, while studying an entry-level course in Astronomy, I was taken aback when the professor explained that we were composed of nothing more than star-dust: the recycled carbon remains of once brilliant stars now long extinct. Thinking about this further, I realized that the "we" must necessarily include all things, both alive and dead, and that what really separates one being from another might be more than just a 'border' formed by our outer skin. Just as a cell in the body has what might at first glance be a clearly defined border, it is itself just a small part of the larger whole, which is an organ, a body, a being. Focusing, then, on even smaller and smaller forms – atoms and nuclei – what "we are" becomes just more empty space. Moreover, the discovery that the human body's composition is made up more of helper bacteria than actual body cells forces one to refocus the biological definition of self to that of a symbiotic relationship, blurring the border between human and non-human.

What would it mean to grow up with this kind of understanding of self? Evernden's ecological question above is not as far-fetched as may appear on first sight: from the atomic point of view, everything *is* part of everything else, but what gives one her or his identity is based on an agreed upon conception of borders. Borders differentiate beings from one another, as well as geo-political spaces, forming empirical and legal notions of entitlement to spaces. They can be physical, as in *The Tortilla Curtain*, represented by borders between countries, walls around elite communities, and even cars. Or they can be naturally occurring, like the river in *Um Rio Chamado Tempo, Uma Casa Chamada Terra*, or the ocean in *A Varanda do Frangipani, Terra Sonâmbula When the Killing's Done*. Crossing borders oftentimes means confronting fears and prejudices,

making paths instead of walls, and, as Couto observes in "O Incendiador de Caminhos", can often be a metaphor for creativity and community building.

In both ecocritical and postcolonial debates, the process of transforming what is perceived as nature into that which is considered culture, parallels the concept of the urban-center vs. the country-margin, both stemming from the privatization of communal land. Deane Curtin in *Environmental Ethics for a Postcolonial World* identifies the sources of privatization of previously held communal land in the Americas with a series of doctrines issued by Pope Nicholas V giving religious authority to occupation of lands, as well as John Locke's treatises, which argued that it is one's labor that creates private property: since the 'wild' Indians, as essentially nomadic peoples, did not work the land with their personal, bodily labor. The resulting doctrine of *terra nullis* – the land of no one – and Manifest Destiny[13], gave one the legal and moral right to privatization of land in North America: "The moral justification for private property is that, through the labor of one's body, which can never be alienated, nature is transformed into culture, and private property becomes possible. Work effects the transformation from nature to culture" (Curtin 134).

Establishing private property, and setting up fences and borders to define this private area, then, also concerns notions of control over nature. In staying in one place rather than living nomadically, moving with (and part of) the changing seasons, the place becomes an extension of the individual self. This sense of place is what differentiates the superficial experience of the tourist with the experiential (time-bound) feelings of a resident: "To the tourist, the landscape is merely a facade, but to the resident it is “the outcome of how it got there and the outside of what goes on inside" (Evernden 99). A reader, like a tourist, is a visitor to the narrative of a work: "the idea of the environment dividing the world into an inside and an outside" (Mazel 140). David Mazel's look at how the environment is represented in narrative looks at the theory of plot typology of myths (as proposed by Jurij Lotman) in which there are, at root, only two archetypes:

[13] Manifest destiny was the controversial notion used to justify western expansion in the United States during the 19th Century, also serving as a reason to enter into the US-Mexican war.

> "(...) those who are mobile, who enjoy freedom with regard to plot-space, who can change their place in the structure of the artistic world and cross the frontier, the basic topological feature of this space, and those who are immobile, who represent, in fact, a function of this space" (Lotman 167).

Both Couto and Boyle are interested in the phenomenolgy of borders and place, and the ways in which they evolved and are manifest in the minds of their characters.

"The Path Burner"[14] and a Sense of Place

In postcolonial theory, argues Maria Fernando Afonso in *O Conto Moçambicano*, the profound sense of place – the *locus epistemologicus* – is based on this perception of inside and outside, where the inside (the place one knows and speaks about) becomes ever anew "the center," as the point of enunciation shifts (Afonso 180). These 'narrative borders' may not immediately be understood by those living outside the place of enunciation. The border defines the place, both literal and figurative, beyond which there is no clear understanding, giving rise to emotions ranging from curiosity to fear.

Couto, in an essay entitled "O Incendiador de Caminhos" (The Path Burner), compares the role of the African fire-starting path-maker with that of the role of the writer. In this essay, Couto is both biologist and writer, explaining that he was often called upon (in his function as a biologist) to educate the population against uncontrolled burns which threaten ecosystems and "espaços úteis e produtivos" (Couto, *Interinvenções* 73). He is quick to add that, unfortunately, we still do not understand the complex nature of the role of fire in the African savanna and that one of the main culprits of man-made fires, besides the slash and burn technique, is what he calls the "homem visitador (74)," the rural family man in Mozambique who has as one of his tasks that of visiting other people in distant villages in order to create bonds of friendship, thus preventing conflicts that might otherwise arise. As he walks, the visitor sets fire to the grass, which serves as a reference for the return as well as helping to scare away dangerous animals. The "incendiador de caminhos,"

[14] "O Incendiador de Caminhos." My translation.

posits Couto, is, essentially, living out humankind's nomadic desire, reminding us that "nossa espécie foi nómada durante centenas de milhares de anos" and "quase noventa por cento do nosso tempo fomos caçadores, deambulando pelas savanas de África" (76). In this search for food "a nossa casa foi um mundo sem moradia" (77) and "a ligação ao lugar sempre foi provisória" (76).

With the advent of agriculture, a sense of place was established, and ideas such as "exile" become possible:

> "Viajar passou a ser um apetite que necessitava de ser cerceado. Semear era preciso. As terras passaram a ser objecto de posse. A ideia de fronteira inscreveu-se como silenciosa lei. Mais além, começavam os domínios dos outros. O mundo passou a ter um "dentro" e um "fora", um "cá" e um "lá" (77).

Travelling beyond borders requires rituals for imagining the unknown, helping to create "nossa cartografia interior" (78). Using the analogy of the path-burner, Couto warns that "estamos recriando o mundo, refazendo-o a jeito de um livro da nossa infância. Estamos brincando com o destino como o gato que faz de conta que o novelo é um rato" (80). It is relevant here to emphasize that this essay was delivered at a conference on travel literature and that Couto is ambivalent of the ways in which a sense of place is created by and for the travel industry, using the cautionary expression "playing with destiny" and the cat and mouse metaphor. The juxtapositioning of scientific knowledge with that of local customs of creating paths by fire gives equal importance to both, in defining the meaning of place, Couto ultimately settling on the idea of a "cartografia interior." The interior (imagined) construction of the foreign place by the "literary tourists" who "take pleasure in exotic location(s) and cultural difference(s)" must nevertheless recognize the "price that others have paid in offering these commodities" (Huggan and Tiffin 81). Couto, by creating the village of Kulumani, in *A Confissão de Leoa*, is equally cautious in labeling rural African village life under the spell of a kind of western utopian idyll: "(...) quis sobretudo contrariar a imagem romântica de África enquanto lugar onde é possível uma harmonia perfeita, a imagem idílica das aldeias em que as pessoas cooperam umas com as outras" (Couto, *Expresso* 8). It is a

place where "tudo está treinado para morder:" brutal nature dominating and circumnavigating the physical space, creating a trapped and enclosed area which imprisons the women of Kulumani.

What can be said, then, about the outsider who is not a tourist, but an immigrant to a new land? In *A Varanda do Frangipani*, Xidimingo, a Portuguese immigrant to Mozambique, explains that

> "África rouba-nos o ser. E nos vaza de maneira inversa: enchendo-nos de alma. Por isso, ainda hoje me apetece lançar fogo nesses campos. Para que eles percam a eternidade. Para que saiam de mim. É que estou tão desterrado, tão exilado que já nem me sinto longe de nada, nem afastado de ninguém (...) Eu quero ser uma pedra à beira dos caminhos" (VDF 49).

Burning up the land is a way to lay claim to a space, to make it one's own. For the immigrant, the outsider from beyond the border, by altering the earth, one can claim, if not ownership, at least a kind of path-making power. For by altering the land with one's own hand, molding and reconstituting it to one's own fancy, one effects culture: the altering of nature through art.

A sense of place is further corrupted when one's home is constantly in motion, as is the case of war refugees. Couto addresses this in *Terra Sonâmbula*, where the legacy of 16 years of civil war in Mozambique forced millions of people to move from their homelands:

> "As diferentes guerras moçambicanas estão na origem da destruição do povoamento rural e do crescimento brutal da população urbana. (…) A deslocação forçada de cinco milhões de pessoas transformou a população rural de Moçambique numa população errante. No romance *Terra Sonâmbula*, Mia Couto retém esta situação de erratibilidade" (Afonso 30).

Dying outside of one's own homeland is a fearful prospect. Ermelindo, the dead soldier in *A Varanda do Frangipani* is not at rest because he was not buried in the proper way, lamenting that he died "fora do meu lugar" (VDF 12), a fact which forces him to become a "passa-noite:" a spirit of the dead occupying a corner inside one living. Nhonhoso (himself a native Mozambican) insists that Xidimingo, the Portuguese immigrant, cannot be buried in Mozambique since "os seus espirítos não pertencem a este lugar. Enterrado aqui, você será um morto sem sossego" (VDF 49). A peaceful death is as important for the living as it is for the dead, since the non-dreaming dead can pose a

threat to the living. Health of the community depends intrinsically on maintaining proper rituals with the dead and dying, as is exemplified in *Um Rio Chamado Tempo, Uma Casa Chamada Terra* where revealing truths about the family were necessary in order for the earth to open itself up to receive Mariano's body for burial. One must "plantar os mortos" in the "casa," the word for "tomb" in the language spoken in Luar-do-Chão (RCT 86).

Luar-do-Chão, the island-country entity, mourns the tragedy of the over-loaded ferryboat that connects the rural island with the city mainland:

> "Quando o barco foi engolido pelas águas, o ceú da Ilha se transtornou. Um golpe robou a luz e as nuvens se adensaram. Um vento súbito se levantou e rondou pelo casario. Na torre da igreja o sino comecou a soar sem que ninguém lhe tivesse tocado. As árvores todas se agitaram e, de repete, num só movimento, seus troncos rodaram e se viraram para o poente. Os deuses estavam rabiscando mágoas no fundo azul dos céus. Os habitantes se apercebiam que o que se passava não era apenas um acidente fluvial. Era muito mais que isso" (RCT 100).

This land in mourning, along with the sleepwalking land in *Terra Sonâmbula*, and even the disappearing land in *O Último Voo do Flamingo*, describe environments with agency: they have a vested interest in what happens to the people who live on it. This sense of the environment as performer answers Mazel's question "How is it that our environment has come to environ *us?*" (Mazel 139), in effect making a reversal of the anthropomorphic concept of the pathetic fallacy. Suggesting here the need for humans to see the world through the perspective of the environmental space: its thoughts, sensations and desires, and to share in this experience, rather than the other way around.

Transcending Borders: Waterways

The physical borders formed by bodies of water are, perhaps predictably, a constant in the work of Couto, whose novels set in rural Mozambique speak of the absolute dependence on water, both as a very real means of subsistence as well as a metaphor for a universal imagination sans borders: "...os rios que percorrem o imaginário do meu país cruzam territórios universais e

desembocam na alma do mundo" (Couto, *Interinvenções* 11). River travel transcends borders, connects the countryside to the urban centers and is a daring and often dangerous endeavor:

- In *A Confissão da Leoa*, Mariamar attempts to escape her oppressive town by floating downstream in a canoe: "Para escapar de Kulumani não há estrada, não há mato. (...) O único caminho que me resta é o rio" (ACL 55);
- In the body of water that separates the island from the city in *Um Rio Chamado Tempo, Uma Casa Chamada Terra* is also the dangerous borderland, where humans are at the mercy of the fragile transportation linking the city with the country: "Aquelas águas, porém, afastam mais que a sua própria distância. Entre um e outro lado reside um infinito. São duas nações, mais longínquas que planetas" (RCT 18);
- In *A Varanda do Frangipani,* the "fraqueleza" is also geographically isolated by the ocean on one side and the land mines on the other, effectively "fechavam o cerco" (VDF 22).
- … and in the connection between ocean water and blood or tears and the ocean in *Mar Me Quer:* "A lágrima é o mar acariciando a sua alma. Essa aguinha somos nós regressando ao primeiro ventre" (50).

These physical borders and the natural threat they present to the protagonists in Couto's novels introduces a nature to be reckoned with at all turns, but he frequently identifies the more essential borders as being those between the living and the dead: "Encheram a terra de fronteiras, carregaram o céu de bandeiras. Mas só há duas nações – a dos vivos e a dos mortos" (RCT 13), where the border between the two states of being/non-being merge in the form of the house without a roof "para limpeza das cósmicas sujidades. A casa é um corpo – o tecto é o que separa a cabeça dos altaneiros céus" (RCT 28-29). The personified house, as that in the title of *Um Rio Chamado Tempo, Uma Casa Chamada Terra,* harks to the expansion of the notion of geo-political borders, even the intimate, familiar idea of what is, in fact, one's home as mentioned in the previous section.

Mariano confronts his uncle's greed with an alternative view of ownership and possession, affirming that the house cannot be bought because "essa casa sou eu mesmo" (RCT 249). Mariano's

discovery of his "true" identity (as son to the defunct Mariano rather than as grandson) is also the discovery of his even deeper birthright, which the journey across the river is but a reminder: It is the time of the rains and the river is red "como um sangue, um ciclo mênstruo vai manchando o estuário" (RCT 19) and not only represents his dead mother, but is her: "Água é o que ela era, meu neto. Sua mãe é o rio, está correndo por aí, nessas ondas" (RCT 105). Mariano, then, does not simply "own" the land, but "is" the land, effectively challenging capitalist notions of private property by equating land ownership with slavery.

The mutable water that is the ocean holds a special place in the iconography of Couto's work.[15] A force with no master, water unifies races and unites the dead with the living. Kindzu shares with the Indian, Surendra, the nationhood of the ocean:

> "E ele me passava um pensamento: nós, os da costa, éramos habitantes não de um continente mas de um oceano. Eu e Surendra partilhávamos a mesma pátria: o Índico. E era como se naquele imenso mar se desenrolassem os fios da história, novelos antigos onde nossos sangues se haviam misturado. Eis a razão por que demorávamos na adoração do mar: estava ali nossos comuns antepassados, flutuando sem fronteiras (...) – Somos da igual raça, Kindzu: somos índicos!" (TS 34).

As Maria Nazareth Fonseca and Maria Zilda Cury note[16], overcoming death in a time of war is powerfully and symbolically displayed in the character of Nhamataca, the river-maker, who would create a river whose waters would "nutrir as muitas sedes, confeitar peixes e terras. Por ali viajariam esperanças, incumpridos sonhos. E seria o parto da terra, do lugar onde os homens guardariam, de novo, suas vidas" (TS 125) and where the waters would "serviriam de fronteira para a guerra. Homem ou barco carregando arma iriam ao fundo, sem regresso" (TS 126). In a place where human cruelty has reached its climax, it is in the inanimate things that one must look to for moral guidance: "nos dias de hoje, os filhos mordem as mães quando ainda estão no ventre. Vejam a pedra em que

[15] Couto's use of water as metaphor is also present in the novel *Mar me quer* (The Ocean Wants Me), a play on the word "Malmequer" (the marigold, whose petals are removed in order to discover if one is loved: "he loves me, he loves me not").

[16] "Uma das imagens de maior força significando essa superação da morte é a do fazedor de um rio (...)" (Fonseca and Cury 49).

me sento: parece morta, enquanto não, vive devargarinho, sem barulho" (TS 96). The river "Mãe-água" would be so named because it would not act like a proper river – with seasonal flooding and drought – but more like a human mother would be expected to act: "(...) o rio tinha vocação para se tornar doce, arrastada criatura. Nunca subiria em fúrias, nunca se deixaria apagar no chão" (TS 126). As a human-made water source, a reservoir (mãe-água also meaning spring or source) it is the place where water is controlled and saved and where the seasonal water supply need not be a condition for crop productivity. Without getting into a larger discussion on gender politics and the feminization of the environment (the "sweet vocation" of the "mother-river,") it is important to note that higher human qualities are passed on to elements of the natural world: the timeless rivers, the nationless oceans, the border-less waters.

Living With(out) Nature: Border Anxiety in Southern California

Perhaps the most persistent metaphor of fear in Boyle's *The Tortilla Curtain* is the construction of borders, in the form of fences and walls, borders between countries and even the more subtle 'borders' created by the metal encasing of cars and the walls of homes. The most obvious reference is the ever-polemical USA/Mexico border, demarcating the north/south poles that separate the economically "wealthy" north from the "poor" south, but which constitutes an integral part of the creation of northern wealth by supplying cheap illegal labor. Another border purporting to screen-out undesirables is the creation of the gated community, for "Safety. Self-protection. Prudence" (TTC 104). Kyra's thriving real estate business feeds off the desire to escape the mass of colored/foreign/othered people:

> "They all wanted something out of the way, something rustic, rural, safe – something removed from people of whatever class and color, but particularly from the hordes of immigrants pouring in from Mexico and Central America, from Dubai, Burundi and Lithuania, from Asia and India and everywhere else in the known world. Brown people. Colored people. People in saris, serapes and kaffiyehs" (TTC 111).

The idea of nature here includes a land exempt not just of humans, but of humans from the "wrong" side of a border, with words like the 'hordes' and 'pouring in' evoking the fear of being overtaken by a sea of people. The homeowners in Delaney's suburb vote to erect a wall and gate, in what they perceive is a realistic response to the 'new' threat from without, something that did not exist when they were children:

> "He thought of the development he'd grown up in, the fenceless expanse of lawns, the shared space, the deep lush marshy woods where he'd first discovered ferns, frogs, garter snakes, the whole shining envelope of creation. There was nothing like that anymore. Now there were fences. Now there were gates" (TCC 43).

It is the loss of the sense of community and communion with kind nature, of innocence in the face of fear, fed in part by the media ("It was humans they were worried about (...) the gangbangers and taggers and carjackers they read about in the Metro section" (TCC 40)). Of course, Delaney is hypocritical: he *does* want to keep the coyotes and foreigners equally out of his yard, to protect his dogs and things, and – despite his outward liberal posturing – he is bothered by the notion of Cándido, whom he sees as yet another form of 'wildlife', exterior to his personal space. He does not understand Candido's "dark language" (108) and a part of him wants to see "the dark alien little man crushed and obliterated, out of his life forever" (108) since Cándido is a constant reminder of his (Delaney's) bigotry. His understanding of immigrant populations is equated with that of animal predatory instincts and predatory species:

> "migratory animal species and how one population responded to being displaced by another. It made for war, for violence and killing, until one group had decimated the other and reestablished its claim to the prime hunting, breeding or gazing ground" (TTC 198).

Delaney's concept of nature is grounded by such notions of borders: that nature belongs on the outside, to be admired, elevated and written about, but, ultimately, to be kept at bay, and where his home and his car are places within which he can assume a sense of control: they can be climatized and protect one from the forces bearing down from without. When Delaney's car is stolen after taking a nature walk in the canyon and being interrupted by two Mexican vagrants, he is given a

glimpse of the danger of living outside "in nature", without the protective walls of the home and car: a glimpse of a day in the life of Cándido. His feels "violated" (150) when his car is stolen, while, in the previous chapter, América, out in the canyon and unprotected by the walls of a house, really *is* raped.

América and Cándido, homeless and starving, regard the idyllic canyon that Delaney tours as a scenic area. Indeed, for those who are forced to live there, it is a prison: a place of horror and despair, with no romantic notions of living in nature. Living on the outside is hell, and having a wall to protect you – if not from the elements then from other humans – is a necessity: "a real house in a real neighborhood with laws and respect and human dignity" (TTC 27). Here, Cándido understands that real borders are also representative of symbolic ones, the "laws and respect" created to protect the community from the impulses of the individual. He is under no illusions about the need for such protection.

The coyote – the lone hunter and trickster – is representative of the wild as opposed to the domesticated animal; the free spirit that comes and goes, disregarding the fences and walls designed to keep it out. Delaney is fascinated by the stealth of the coyote and its ability to survive changes in its environment. His take on the "nature" of the coyote is one of cautionary conservation, to live and let live, but keep to your side of the fence. As Delaney writes, we are aware that he is speaking more about Mexicans, specifically "his Mexican" (Cándido) rather that the coyotes. In his column "Pilgrim at Topanga Creek" (a nod to Anne Dillard's Pulitzer Prize winning *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*) he supports the "control" of the invasive coyote population via capture and euthanasia by animal control so as to no longer "invade" the "*sanctum sanctorum* of their fenced-in yard" (TTC 219). Near the end of the essay, Delaney reveals his thought process, which elides the immigrant with the animal:

> "The coyote is not to blame – he is only trying to survive, to make a living, to take advantage of the opportunities available to him. (...) The coyotes keep coming, breeding up to fill in the gaps, moving in where the living is easy. They are cunning, versatile, hungry and unstoppable" (221).

Kyra, tapping into her personal fears, is quick to blame the fire on Mexican immigrants, using the same fear-laden vocabulary:

> "It was the Mexicans who'd done this. Illegals. (...) Sneaking across the border, ruining the schools, gutting property values and freeloading on welfare, (...) They were like the barbarians outside the gates of Rome, only they were already inside, polluting the creek and crapping in the woods, threatening people (...)" (320).

Pregnant América, trapped in the valley and hiding from dangerous men who had raped her, sees a coyote and begins to see herself one of them, sharing a common enemy:

> "She looked at that coyote so long and so hard that she began to hallucinate, to imagine herself inside those eyes looking out, to know that men were her enemies – men in uniform, men with their hats reversed, men with fat bloated hands and fat bloated necks, men with traps and guns and poisoned bait" (184).

América and the coyote are both part of Delaney's collective idea of outsiders, spoiling his aesthetic, cleaned-up, and safe version of the wilderness. But the coyote is also representative of the human masses in general, taking over space and using up all the available resources. The Topanga State Park has been "rescued" from the developers and "set aside for use of the public, for nature, nor for some outdoor ghetto" (11). His ideas of 'nature' and 'parks' follows along the lines defined by the pastoral and the 'picturesque aesthetic' that Alison Byerly speaks of, whereby the idea of nature and wilderness is part of an aesthetic construct or framing (or bordering) that makes the land suitable for "artistic consumption" (Byerly 53) for a mostly elite and wealthy upper-class. Delaney ascribes to this view: there is no place in this aesthetic idea of nature for homeless immigrants, who are "crapping in the chaparral" and "dumping (their) trash behind rocks, polluting the stream and ruining it for everyone else" (11). Here the national park is somewhat precariously defined as communal land, when, in fact, its purpose is to deliver a controlled and safe experience of the outdoors for those who spend most of their time (safely) indoors.

Boyle's novel simultaneously explores social borders around ethnicity and nationality – a particularly sensitive topic in Southern California – with that of the species border – the human and non-human, and he muses upon the need for such identifiers: "I wonder on a species level, a

biological level, we are all one species, whether the walls mean anything or even if countries mean anything, anymore" (Boyle, *Interview* 8:13).

Entitlement and Temporal Borders in *When the Killing's Done*

Entitlement is at the heart of Boyle's *When the Killing's Done*, which explores the question "what gives one the moral right to rule over another being?" Entitlement is also understood as permission: the authority to exert one's superiority, either ethically or morally. Postcolonial theory looks for ways to reveal such concepts of entitlement, especially as it concerns land rights, ideas of racial and sexual superiority/inferiority, and nationhood. Huggan and Tiffin, in looking at how postcolonial pastoral in New Zealand struggles with white settler anxiety, assert that:

> "(…) historical awareness of expropriated territory, and the legal fiction of entitlement does not necessarily bring with it the emotional attachment that turns 'house and land' into home. After all, to assert one's right to live in a place is not the same thing as to dwell in it or inhabit it; for assertion is possession, not belonging, and dwelling implies an at-homeness with place that the genealogical claim to entitlement may reveal, but just as easily obscure" (Huggan and Tiffin 82).

Hence, how one is attached to a place emotionally (coexisting with it, respecting it, loving it) helps to justify possession of land that was acquired by force sometime in the past. And while their concern is primarily with revealing the ways in which the pastoral mode runs counter to the postcolonial project (entitlement here specifically involving land rights and the emotional and/or imaginative possession of a place) perceiving entitlement from an *inter-species perspective* is what Boyle is keen to explore, starting with animal rights from an anthropomorphic viewpoint, as set in the well-known passage of *Genesis* (1:28), which serves as the prologue to the book:

> "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth"(WKD prologue)

For Alma, the biologist, her human entitlement to "subdue" and "dominate" other species is moderated by her perceived role of protector: she plays God in deciding which species live and die

on the island ecosystems she is responsible for in her function as a director of the National Park Service, the state agency which manages island use. Her nemesis is the animal rights activist who questions her moral right to kill other animals. To sum up, Alma favors saving native species of the island, which are threatened with extinction by introduced species that are larger in number and which have no natural enemies to cull their numbers. Her decision to kill off the non-native species is based on the scientific knowledge that the native species are threatened precisely because of previous human intervention: rats were introduced to the island during a shipwreck and pigs when sheep-farmers settled the island. Her role, as she sees it, is one of righting a past wrong. But her decision is not without ethical problems: for those who believe that all beings have a moral right to life, any kind of killing is murder, regardless of the end goal. If one is to argue native rights (in this case, for animals living on the island) then how far back does one go to make a claim for native status? This cutting-off point, a *temporal border*, is Alma's philosophical blind spot. Preservation of one species means the annihilation of another, and by being the one to make the decision in this regard, she is effectively altering ecosystems that are very little understood, as Couto has argued above. Biospheres may be more changeable than static, following chaos theory of random movement more than ideas of balance and harmony. What are the unforeseen circumstances of mass killing of any animals over the long run? Perhaps the introduction of the raccoons to the island will have unforeseen consequences on the native fauna. Boyle seems to imply that this is a natural state of affairs: humans rarely question their superiority over other species. Overlapping and complex island ecosystems cannot be entirely protected from the outside, with the water only creating a border to some, but not all, intruders. If it is human nature to lament the passing of time and the aging process, then clearly the need to preserve an idea of nature based on what *was* is to be challenged, in true ecocritical and postcolonial fashion.

A good example of this is the case of the sheep farmers who once made a meager living on the island. The apparent contradiction of protecting the sheep and the lambs only to bring them to slaughter reveals the function of the sheep as commodity. Even so, human sentiment for the

pointless death of the lambs is a reminder that the relationship is more than just economic: "That was a kind of heartbreak that jumped species, from *Ovis aries to Homo sapiens*" (WKD 172). It is a defining moment for Anise, who thereafter works to bring public awareness of animal rights though her songwriting. Common ground is in the suffering: of mothers for their dead children. The sheep farmer is viewed sympathetically in the novel, as they are seen to work in and with the difficult environment around them, having earned the right to kill the animals they have taken care of through so much hardship. It is a different kind of killing: one of survival, rather than the killing for sport that spells the demise for the sheep farmers on the island. Theirs was "the deepest requited love of a place that was like the love of the soul of God" (WKD 186) when told that they would have to leave.

Alma's sense of entitlement is defined by her years of education, her perceived status as a scientist, and her job position, giving her the authority to decide what lives and dies, even as it concerns her own unborn child. Confronted with the decision to abort her child on the apparently logical grounds that there were "too many people on the earth," she instead decides to follow her feelings in the matter and have the baby, despite her rationalization that "to bring a child into an overpopulated world is irresponsible, wrong, nothing less than sabotage" for those people like herself: "committed environmentalists. Dedicated to saving the ecosystem" (WKD 283). Alma's environmental guilt is so deep that she even questions her biological right to have a child, to "be fruitful and multiply." Alma's plight is that of the environmentally hyperaware: "Guilt – that's what defines her usage. Guilt over being alive, needing things, consuming things, turning the tap or lighting the flame under the gas burner" (WKD 191). Emotionally speaking, there are similarities between this and postcolonial white settler anxiety, a theme in contemporary Australian literature: "The crisis of belonging that accompanies split cultural allegiance, the historical awareness of expropriated territory, and the suppressed knowledge that the legal fiction of entitlement does not necessarily bring with it the emotional attachment that turns 'house and land' into home" (Huggan

and Tiffin 82). Like the white settler, Alma's thinking creates a crisis of place: environmentally speaking, humans wreck havoc thus she questions her very right to live in the world.

Perhaps this is a reflection of the cultural anxiety of living post-millennium, of having a glimpse of what the future may contain for our species, indeed for the world as a whole that provokes Alma's existential crisis. Homi Bhabha, begins *The Location of Culture* by quoting Heidegger's thoughts on borders: a boundary should be viewed not as that which stops, but as that "from which something begins its presencing" (Bhabha 1). Living with the ambivalent double role of both killer/savior, Alma (her name meaning "nourishing and kind" in Latin or "soul" in both Spanish and Portuguese) represents the balancing act one plays in straddling the border between understanding environmental history and the taking responsibility for its future, a Zeitgeist of California at the end of the century. The art of living in the present, as Bhabha proposes, is gifted to Alma during the ever so brief moments when she is out hiking the island:

> "It's quiet, as quiet as the world must have been before the invention of the internal combustion engine, the sea and the wind providing the backdrop to the barking of the seals and the mewling of the birds. Sometimes, when she's out here alone, she can feel the pulse of something bigger, as if all things animate were beating in unison, a glory and a connection that sweeps her out of herself, out of her consciousness, so that nothing has a name, not in Latin, not in English, not in any known language" (WKD 101).

Left unnamed, the world around her is mysteriously satisfying, expansive and inclusive, borderless, and "presencing".

Chapter Five: Humans and Non-Humans

> "Até que os leões inventem as suas próprias histórias, os caçadores serão sempre os heróis das narrativas de caça. - provérbio africano" (Couto, *A Confissão da Leoa* 11).

In attempting a less anthropomorphic worldview, the literary ecocritic may focus on the very representation of non-human nature in a work, questioning even the categorization of the human from the non-human and taking from the physical and natural sciences more affinities between species than classic humanist thinking would find acceptable. Such an ontological shift requires that the net be cast further afield, bringing into the fold concepts and raw data from a variety of disciplines outside of the humanities. While distancing myself from ideas behind social Darwinism, I ascribe to Glen Love's understanding that human biology – and thus animal biology – plays an important role in our view of the world and in the cultural productions that are a result of that understanding. Moreover, in combatting the alienating effects of postmodernism, with its "dismissal of nature, and especially human nature," nature-conscious works offer a much needed "corrective" (Love 26) to the pessimism of our times. As is seen in the works by both Couto and Boyle, human/animal and human/non-human connections are explored as key relationships in the lives of the protagonists, reflecting contrasting worldviews, which nevertheless place the non-human and the human on the same plane.

Who Speaks for the Non-human?

Is true (re)presentation of non-human animals in literature, first and foremost, an impossible endeavor? Can one truly see things from a non-human animal's unique perspective and unknown language? As postcolonial critics, such as Spivak and Said have asserted, speaking for human "others" is itself a problematic position, especially when that other speaks another language, or, in the case of nature, is lacking recognizable speech at all. Anthony Vital, like Dominic Head before

him[17], finds this impossibility of translation to be a crucial point of intersection between postcolonial and ecocritical perspectives:

> "Non-human nature, lacking an equivalent to human linguistic codes, does not speak. It has to be spoken for by the same humans who are de-centered as speaking subjects. Non-human nature can quite obviously, in its own ways, signify (...) but nature cannot either authorize or dispute a translation" (Vital 89).

What the literary works themselves reveal, then, are ethical and moral attitudes *towards* non-humans rather than any "real" representation of them. Notwithstanding, it is through the reflection of the natural through narratives, as Hannes Bergthaller argues, that ethical considerations are best reflected upon and understood. To make his point, he uses the example of the well-known children's book in the U.S. by Theodore Geisel (Dr. Seuss), *The Lorax*, which was originally published in 1971 as environmental propaganda, "an allegory of postmodern ecology" (Bergthaller 171), showing that what we actually know or think we know about nature is in fact defined by our lack of knowledge of that same nature. While the trees do not speak in their own defense, the Lorax, a tree spirit, speaks for them. And so "Nature is silent in our culture (and in literate societies generally) in the sense that the status of being a speaking subject is jealously guarded as an exclusively human prerogative" (Manes 15). Effectively, and as Bergthaller argues in his essay, the ethical force comes from texts which attempt to "reshape attitudes towards nature", and while not necessarily focusing on the "text's faithfulness to ecological facts" (presumably because the very complexity of ecosystems is not easily summarized in a children's book), shows narrative force of the text (Bergthaller 155).

While commonly found and accepted in children's books and films, for adults, the speaking animal – the fabular tale – finds more acceptable expression in oral cultures[18]. In oral cultures, animals are active agents not only in stories, but also in daily life. The border that is thought to exist

[17] See both: Head, Dominic. "The (Im)Possibility of Ecocriticism." *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*. Ed. Richard Kerridge and Sammells Neil. London: Zed Books, 1998. 27-39. Print; and Head, Dominic. "Ecocriticism and the Novel" *The Green Studies Reader: from Romanticism to Ecocriticism*. Ed. Laurence Coupe. London: Routledge, 2000. 235-241. Print.

[18] There are of course notable exceptions such as *The Life of Pi* by Yann Martel and *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville.

between animal and human is more ambiguous, and what is seen as animal may in fact be a spirit of a human who has died, transformed into the body of another kind of animal. That this is self-evident in cultures surrounded by and in daily contact with non-human animals is of no surprise. In modern urban and western cultures, animals are categorized according to the control humans can exert on them: domesticated animals are under the control and care of humans, while "wild" animals range outside this sphere of human husbandry. The western categorizing of animals into the dichotomies of wild/tame and game/produce is often taken as a given, but, as Virginia Anderson argues in *Creatures of Empire*, Native American nomadic Indians found these terms unfamiliar:

> "Aware of the power of animal spirits, native hunters treated their prey with respect and performed rituals defined by reciprocity. Although not quite a relationship of equals, the connection between Indians and prey was not essentially hierarchical. But notions of domination and subordination were central to the English, who believed that the act of hunting epitomized the divinely sanctioned ascendancy of humankind over animals" (Anderson 58).

Couto's work addresses, in a similar fashion, Mozambican oral cultures in regard to the representation of animals: "No cosmo africano (...) as relações entre os homens e os animais são regulares e têm formas variadas, assumindo muitas vezes um sentido religioso. A escrita de Mia Couto acolhe facilmente estas crenças" (Afonso 369). In his fictional world, Couto's non-human animals often play important narrative roles. This is most evident in *A Confissão da Leoa*, in which the very definition of what it means to be a lion is questioned, an in *A Varanda do Frangipani*, where the pangolin is both a pet and wise spirit guide.

By way of contrast, Boyle's non-humans, while they do not speak, do signify: The sickly lions in *A Friend of the Earth* kill their keeper while the lone Patagonia fox becomes the domesticated "dog." And, in *When the Killing's done*, the muddle caused by the human interference in the introduction and removal of domesticated and wild animals puts into question the ethical right to "play god", as it were, by choosing which animals live and die. Boyle's works often entertain contemporary dialogue regarding unquestioned presumptions of the human relationship

with animals: as food, as companions, as scenery, for protection, or – as is more often the case – victims of human "progress."

The Pangolin Guide in *A Varanda do Frangipani*

Couto's *A Varanda do Frangipani* begins and ends with the intervention of the pangolin, a scaly mammal similar to the armadillo, who is both pet and sage guide to the dead Ermelindo Mucanga, a human spirit unwilling to play the role of a war hero:

> "Consultei o pangolim, meu animal de estimação. Há alguém que desconheça os poderes deste bicho de escamas, o nosso halakavuma? Pois este mamífero mora com os falecidos. Desce dos céus aquando das chuvadas. Tomba na terra para entregar novidades ao mundo, as proveniências do porvir" (VDF 15).

The pangolin, with its connections to higher forces can see the future, create storms ("eu conduzo o furacão" (VDF 148)) and offer sage axioms ("não é o pangolim que diz que todo o ser é tão antigo quanto a vida?" (VDF 149)). Following the pangolin's advice, Ermelindo Mucanga becomes a *xipoco*, or *passa-noite*, a spirit occupying a living being, in order to die once again in a proper fashion "apanhar boleia dessa outra morte e dissolver-me nessa findação" (VDF 16). Ermelindo wonders if the pangolin, which has been living in the frangipani tree, is leading him astray, simply making things up since spending too much time up a tree and therefore away from reality:

> "Esse halakavuma dizia a verdade? Ou inventava, de tanto estar longe do mundo? Há anos que ele não descia ao solo, suas unhas já cresciam a redondear umas tantas voltas. Se mesmo as patas dele tinham saudade do chão, por que motivo sua cabeça não fantasiava loucuras?" (VDF 17).

From its place in the frangipani tree, the pangolin, speaking now only as a voice inside Ermelindo's head, lays out the plans to save the policeman Izidine from assassins: "Ele iria juntar forças deste e de outros mundos e faria desabar a total tempestade. Granizos e raios tombariam sobre o forte" (VDF 148). If one were to consider a *hierarchy of awareness*, the young living human (Izidine, the policeman) occupies the most limited sphere, understanding only the physical, empirical world, followed by the elderly and the nurse (whose claims to a wider, "hidden" knowledge is augmented

with memory and respect for the "old ways"), and then the dead Ermelindo (whose state as a spirit allows him to view the actions and thoughts of the living, and to converse with animals), and finally to the pangolin (the entity who can see the future and manipulate natural forces). In the remote "fraqueleza", far from the modern city, it is the animals that have human pets ("Está a ouvir essa coruja? Não receie. Ela é minha dona, eu pertenço a essa ave. Essa coruja me padrinhou e sustenta. Todas as noites me traz restos de comida" (VDF 34)).

Nature, in the form of a lightening bolt sent by the pangolin, intervenes to save the Izidine from the would-be assassins and Ermelindo finds resolution – a dreamless sleep of the dead – in an exchange of energy, his own supplying life to the charred frangipani, a place where miracles happen:

> "Recordei ensinamentos do pangolim. A árvore era o lugar de milagre. Então desci do meu corpo, toquei a cinza e ela se converteu em pétala. Remexi a réstia do tronco e a seiva refluiu, como sémen da terra. A cada gesto meu o frangipani renascia. E quando a árvore todas se reconstituiu, natalícia, me cobri com a mesma cinza em que a planta se desintactara. Me habilitava assim a vegetal, arborizado" (VDF 151).

The symbiotic curative (tree to spirit, and spirit to tree) and the almost casual reference to Christmas (the tree with the appearance of "natalícia" and the albeit very oblique reference to Ermelindo as a carpenter working for the Portuguese and dying on the eve of the revolution of independence, not having participated in the fight) give rise to a larger ceremony of post-war forgiveness and reconciliation, where brotherhood is attained ("Me chamava de irmão. O velho me ratificava de humano, sem culpa de eu, em vida, não ter sido outro" (VDF 151)).

Couto's choice in using a pro-active nature as the cathartic enjoiner – the restorative balm through which even the dead find comfort – is in keeping with what theorist Inocência refers to as the *dupla demanda* which reflects the writing found in African literature written in Portuguese during the period of independence and civil war: It is "a catarse dos lugares coloniais, ainda não processada, uma vez que o colonial é ainda uma presença obsidiante, não apenas em literatura, e a revitalização de uma nova utopia que os escritores buscam (...)" (Mata 49). The animal totem – the

pangolin – and the frangipani tree together form a bridge between a time before and after wars and even physical life itself, and in so doing amplify the scope of the novel to beyond the mere facts of a murder, the abandonment of the elderly, the decay of a fort. As Manes has observed, "All over the world learning the language of animals, especially of birds, is equivalent to knowing the secrets of nature. (...) We tend to relegate such ideas to the realm of superstition and irrationality, where they can easily be dismissed" (Manes 17). In Couto's retooled and modernized animism, nature may be silent, but only for the uninitiated, the excessively rational and those who have no memory.

Biophilia and Biofobia in T.C. Boyle

Biophilia, which can be summarized as "the innate urge to affiliate with other forms of life" (Wilson, *Biophilia* 85) was popularized by Edward O. Wilson, acclaimed socio-biologist and conservationist, in several books[19]. The "innate urge" refers to the (still) controversial theory that human affinity to love other life forms is genetically encoded (and thus inherited) rather than (just) culturally informed (learned). Even more significantly, it is this characteristic for empathy that is a defining factor in being human: "Humanity is exalted not because we are so far above other living creatures, but because knowing them well elevates the very concept of life" (Wilson, *Biophilia* 22). Biophilia's natural opposite is Biofobia: the dangers and fears of natural settings and of predatory animals. David W. Orr observes that the more involved humans become more obsessed in the products of their own creations (technology), the more they exhibit signs of biophobia:

> "Biophobia ranges from discomfort in "natural" places to active scorn for whatever is not man-made, managed, or air-conditioned. Biophobia, in short, is the culturally acquired urge to affiliate with technology, human artifacts, and solely with human interests regarding the natural world" (Orr 415).

Humans, he believes, are more and more uncomfortable with and idea of nature that is beyond their control. Orr also wonders if, as Wilson and others argue, biophilia is a necessary state for mental and physical health (Orr 416). In any case, Orr argues that biophilia as "the affinity for life" is a

[19] *Biophilia* (1984) and *The Biophilia Hypothesis* (1993), edited by and Stephen R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson.

choice that must be taken, especially in the realm of genetic engineering, which is capable of "reweaving the fabric of life on earth" (Orr 417). Jurassic Park fears aside, Boyle explores human thoughts on animals, ranging from the biophilia to the biofobia in many of his novels and short stores, most notably in *When the Killing's Done* and *A Friend of the Earth.* With very few exceptions[20], Boyle's animals do not speak for themselves, but their presence reveals the parallels between western ideas about what it means to be an animal rather than a human and questions the ethical right humans have in using animals for their own benefit. As Boyle defends, a writer should not be limited by his or her own race, sex or even human-ness when writing a work of fiction:

> "A good novelist should be able to be anybody and do anything. Along these lines anyway…my proudest moments are in a story called "Big Game" in which for a couple of paragraphs I got to inhabit the mind of an elephant" (Boyle, *Interview* 3:23).

The ethical acceptability of killing of non-humans – the same acceptability that justified mass killings of humans based on racial distinctions – is explored in *When the Killing's Done*, where justification for the killing of rats and pigs is due to their non-native status: they are deemed less valuable to preservation because of their large number, their labels as pests (rats) and food (pigs), lower categories than those of the endangered species found on the island. The animal activists comically try to prevent the poisoning of the rats by dropping vitamin K pellets on the island, the antidote to rat poison. The antidote was conceived, however, in the event of humans inadvertently taking the rat poison, not for saving rats themselves. And while Boyle does not preach, his character does, when LaJoy rages that he cannot get the courts to stop the National Park Service's goal of eliminating the rats:

> "Every lawsuit he's brought has been thrown out of court because the judges work for the system and the system is the National Park Service. And now they're closing the island in their typical imperious way, no matter what the will of the people says, no matter how many petitions come across their desks or how many protesters stand out there chanting, because they are confident no one's going to

[20] Notable exceptions are Boyle's Short Stories "Big Game" in which we hear an elephant's thoughts, and the "Descent of Man," where a trained chimp communicates using sign language.

> cross that channel when the water gets rough. With the Civil Rights Movement you could get on a bus and drive down to Mississippi, with Vietnam you could bring people to Washington in cars, buses, trains and jet planes" (WTKD 211).

LaJoy's private rage (he takes Xanax to help control his emotions) finds an outlet in the animal rights movement, but like Tyrone In *A Friend of the Earth*, the monkey wrenching is more of an acting out of some unspoken alienated anger, rather than a deep conviction for saving animals. By comparing the needs of the animal rights movement with that of the Civil Rights, Lajoy's thinking equates the discrimination of animals on the same plane as the discrimination of Black Americans. Given the context of the comparison and the character verbalizing it, we are meant to think this is a preposterous comparison. But is such a comparison really so farfetched? The civil rights movement, like the anti-war movement, gained momentum due to the sheer number of people willing to mobilize behind the various causes. LaJoy has the megalomaniac need to be the center of attention, while his cause célèbre is almost ludicrous, a means to an end. It is, however a logical cause for one such as LaJoy, whose somewhat autistic inability to empathize with other humans makes the rights of non-humans his primary focus:

> "And that's an automatic thing with him, calling a bum a bum instead of one of the homeless or less fortunate or needy or apartmentally challenged or whatever the phrase of the week is, Anise forever trying to correct him on that score, because his sympathies lie with the animals that *can't* help themselves – the pigs electroshocked into the killing chute, the chickens dismembered on the assembly line while they're still half-alive and conscious, the rabbits and donkeys and sheep the Park Service slaughtered on Santa Barbara and San Miguel and Santa Cruz islands without batting an eye – and not some white-haired upright primate who's had all the advantages of living in America instead of some third-world country and still just wants to plant himself in the grass and suck on a bottle all day long in infantile regression. Is this a fundamental inconsistency: pro-animal, anti-human?" (WTKD 69).

Of course, as his diatribe reminds us (if not him), humans are also animals ("upright primates"). What elicits his sympathies is the notion of the *helpless* animal: The animal that can't defend itself, who is bred for food, imprisoned, and "inhumanely" killed. The gruesome truth behind mass-

produced meat production in industrialized countries drives many to eschew meat all together, including his nemesis Alma of the Park Service.

LaJoy's fantasy as savior of the animals is further diminished by his lack of scientific knowledge about the consequence of his actions. What is the long-term result of capturing and releasing the raccoons onto the island? Indeed the very act of capturing the raccoons has more to do with maintaining his manicured lawn intact than with any real commitment to saving species. He feels

> "Satisfaction. Vindication. And a strange sort of power, of species superiority – they'd assaulted him, however unconsciously, however naturally (...) For a long moment, poised on one knee, he simply watches them – and they watch him in return, as aware as he is that they're his now, that they've been caught by a larger, more gifted predator, that any hope they might have had of escape or even survival is nil" (WTKD 230).

Control over the wild animals, through entrapment and purchase, is LaJoy's "pleasure" but when confronted with a deadly animal – the rattlesnake out of its bag – "he understands, for the first time, how wrong this is, how wrong he's been, how you have to let the animals – the animals – decide for themselves" (WTKD 358). Alma's scientific learning about the consequences of introduced species nevertheless comes to a contrary conclusion: that the animals should *not* decide for themselves, but should be managed, their populations controlled by the knowledgeable humans, and, if need be, eliminated (killed) when their numbers are deemed to be too large. As Boyle shows, neither Alma nor LaJoy truly challenge established ideas about human superiority over non-humans. Having no voice, the non-humans are merely represented by advocates for their right to live.

Killing Animals and Animals Who Kill

When the Killing's Done and *A Confissão da Leoa* are fictional works inspired by real environmental events in California and Mozambique, respectively. The Northern Channel Islands, under the protection of the National Park Services, have been cleared of rats, pigs, sheep and mules

amidst some protest that claimed that the work was "systematic biotic genocide."[21] *A Confissão da Leoa* is based on true facts that occurred while Couto and a group of field biologists were performing environmental impact assessments[22] (EIA) for a petroleum company in Cabo Delgado, in the North of Mozambique: "Sugerimos à companhia petrolífera que tomasse em suas mãos a superação definitiva dessa ameaça: a liquidação dos leões comedores de pessoas" (CDL 9-10). Couto, besides writing, works for *Impacto*, a company that elaborates EIAs in Mozambique. He has also contributed to a study on the impact of the 12-year war on biodiversity in Mozambique.[23]

The methods and philosophy predominate in the US Park Services is one of conservation rather than preservation and is often the source of conflict between environmentalist and the National Park Service. Conservation chooses to look at the ways in which areas and fauna can be utilized over a series of years, their resources used for profit but maintaining for future generations some form of the wild. Preservation, however, calls for a hands-off view towards environmental management, natural areas and fauna left unmolested. The National Park Service has, over the years, come under scrutiny for abuses regarding forestry use for commercial logging, for example, in the US northwest.

Mozambique's story of environmental conservation comes from a very different point of entry and having a potentially larger importance in maintaining peace in the region.[24] The war of independence ending in 1972 and the 12-year civil war that followed left the country's large fauna almost completely decimated. Moreover, very few qualified personnel existed in the country to help enforce laws for species protection. Poaching and deforestation was a result of the huge number of displaced people who needed wood for food fires and meat to eat. Currently, monetary incentives

[21] http://www.animalpeoplenews.org/05/4/tsg.channelIslands4.05.htm

[22] "Environmental Impact Assessment: means an instrument for preventive environmental management; it consists of the prior quantitative and qualitative identification and analysis of the beneficial and deleterious environmental impacts of a proposed activity" (Article 1-5, LAW Nº / 97 of July 30, English Translation of Environment Law Approved 28/7/97. http://www.impacto.co.mz/LegislacaoAmbiental_EN.html. Web.)

[23] *Biodiversity and War.*

[24] "If this ambitious plan (The Transfrontier National Park) is fulfilled it will represent a new spirit of cooperation between two southern African countries that only 10 years ago were diametrically opposed both politically and militarily" (Hatton 39).

are being given to people to move off of proposed parklands in order to protect endemic Mozambican species[25].

Both in the United States and Mozambique, tension mounts when environmental preservation is viewed as running counter to the needs of the local populations. In the Northern California redwood forests mentioned in *A Friend of the Earth*, the logging industry came to heads with environmental groups over the preservation of the spotted owl. Preservation of the endangered owl meant no logging, which affected local mono-economies that were almost entirely dependent upon lumber extraction. In Northern Mozambique, where lions – not normally man-eaters but who became so as a result of the war, where murdered humans were an easy meal – are a threat to the local population, especially the women, who live in fear of being *eaten* while they go about their daily lives, gardening and going for water. In the United States, large predators (such as bears and wolves), which threaten human populations, are extremely rare, but when they do appear, they are also quickly killed. Living in fear of man-eating animals is an experience that has been completely eradicated from the psyche of those people living in urban areas, so much so that when confronted with such animals, as happens in National Parks, many people are seduced into viewing the picturesque quality of the experience rather than the potential for violence.

In *A Friend of the Earth*, Ratchiss the hunter who "gave up his desk job to go to Africa" because he "hated wild animals," tells the story of how his sister was mauled and killed by a black bear that his father wanted to photograph "while mounted on the thing's back." The event could have been prevented had his father had a clue as to the real nature of bears. Ratchiss, the boy

> "saw the whole thing, my mother screaming, my father wrestling with this snarling bolt of stinking primitive energy, my sister, and I didn't do a thing, nothing, just stood there.... It took me half my life, looking at my father's disfigured face and the looping white scars down his back every time we went to the beach or pool, to understand that it wasn't the bear's fault" (FOE 166).

[25] "A Ford Foundation-funded project is currently underway to encourage settlers to leave the (Moribane Forest Reserve) and to control slash and burn within the reserve and surrounding areas" (Hatton 51).

Rather than avoiding similar encounters in the future, Ratchiss chose to repeat the emotional intensity acquired by coming into contact with deadly animals that still live in the wild and imagined Africa space, countering Sierra's naive observation "how could anybody *hate* animals?" (FOE 163). Nothing, in seems, compares to the real lived experience.

A similar disjunction between the "real" animal and its existence as a symbol is the sickly lion Dandelion that ends in its killing Mac in his own "safe" house. The lion, along with the other rare animals in Mac's menagerie add to Mac's mystique and status as an eccentric star. Even the name they give the lion is diminutive and cheeky, the name of a flower a child would pick and hold. Once freed, the lion did what lions do: "In the wild, when there was a wild, lions would kill their prey through suffocation" (FOE 249). In Boyle's dystopic future, the "wild" is now *indoors,* that space originally conceived to provide comfort from the deadly dangers from without.

Hunting Lions

The lion's symbolic importance for urban humans is also undertaken in the character of the writer Gustavo Regalo in *A Confissão da Leoa*, who is "contra as caçadas. Ainda por cima tratando-se de leões" (ACL 70). The hunter, piqued, clarifies that the writer has never really experienced a lion: "Viu leões em safaris fotográficos, mas você não sabe o que é um leão. O leão só se revela, em verdade, no território em que ele é rei e senhor. Venha comigo a pé pelo mato e saberá o que é um leão" (ACL 70). Arcanjo identifies Gustavo's hate of the hunt as something that comes from his own fear of himself: "Por muito que ele vivesse num mundo urbano e moderno, o primitivo mato continuava vivo dentro dele. Parte da sua alma seria sempre bravia, cheia de indomáveis monstros" (ACL 109). Gustavo's role is that of the skeptical urbanite, the reader viewing facts outside his sphere of knowledge. What is real can mean many things: he is told, for example, that there are three kinds of lions: bush-lions, fabricated lions made by sorcerers, and people-lions, all of which are real in the minds of the Kulumani (ACL 124).

Exploring what is considered "real" is the subtext that runs through the novel: from the mental state of Mariamar, the true circumstances involving the condition of women in the village,

and the nature of the lions themselves. A prologue to the story is a quote taken from a gnostic (pre-Christian) text "The Evangelic according to Thomas": "Bendito seja o leão que o homem comerá e o leão em humano se tornará; e maldito seja o homem que o leão comerá, e o leão se tornará humano" (ACL 13). The act of eating (killing) lions or humans effects a transformation of lion into man or man into lion. The interspecies divide is crossed by the act of consumption, and it is the events that created these "more-than-lion" lions that are the subject of Couto's work. While Boyle's lions represent "the wild", Couto lions exist as a physical and spiritual manifestation, an embodiment and result of human women's sublimated rage, if not the women themselves.

The existence of the lion-people (*vatumi va vanu*), the magically fabricated lions made in order to pass judgment upon others, is part of the belief system of the villagers, who, we learn, have something to hide. Silence, which, as Mpepe says "só os humanos sabem," (ACL 22) contrasts with the transparency of the natural world,

> "Para os demais bichos, o mundo nunca está calado e até o crescer das ervas e o desabrochar das pétalas fazem um enorme barulho (...) Era o que o meu pai, naquele momento, invejava: ser um bicho. E longe dos humanos, regressar à sua toca, adormecer sem pena nem culpa" (ACL 22).

Humans maintaining this silence drive the novel forward: Mariamar's sister, "Silência," is killed (silenced) by the lion, Mariamar is kept indoors and out of contact with outsiders, and the village itself keeps silent to the abuses that the women endure (group rape, servitude, and entrapment). The appearance of the man-eating lions break this silence which defines Kulumani, revealing the social dramas that exist in its midst.

Even the nature of the hunt is narrative: as the hunter tries to find and kill the man-eating lions, village secrets begin to surface, gaining more importance as the story progresses. Contact and communion with lions is, significantly, a purely female prerogative. Mariamar sees her mother violently, if willfully, sexually attacked by her father, transforming the act into an attack of a lion with feline appetites; later, she sees a lioness on the shore when she tries to escape Kulumani for the first time, convinced that it contains the soul of her dead sister: "a leoa saúda-me, com respeito de

irmã. Demoramo-nos nessa mútua contemplação e, aos poucos, um religioso sentimento de harmonia se instala em mim" (ACL 62). Mariamar believes that the lions that threaten the village are females, "é esta leoa que tanto terror tem espalhado em todas as vizinhanças. Homens poderosos, guerreiros munidos de sofisticadas armas: todos se prostraram, escravos de medo, vencidos pela sua própria impotência" (ACL 62). The lioness has the power to subdue men in a way that the women in Kulumani do not. During the return to the village, Maliqueto Próprio (mal=evil, queto=quiet, próprio=in the flesh) attempts to rape Mariamar and is surprised by her fight, her nails causing "fundos rasgões" (65) on his arm. Assuming a lioness's attitude, Mariamar is able to escape his advances, but as such is labeled as "crazy". Naftalinda, the fearless first lady of the village, is like the lions who have been attacking the village: she, too, has lost her fear of men and denounces both the traditions that exclude women and the secrecy that has occulted the crime of group rape: "Fingem que estão preocupados com os leões que nos tiram a vida. Eu, como mulher, pergunto: mas que vida há ainda para nos tirar?" (ACL 125).

Throughout the novel there is a clear connection being made between the act of killing and communion with animals. Couto inserts a translation of Walter Benjamin's "Hunt of the Butterfly" which synthesizes this idea:

> "Entre mim e a presa, agora, a velha lei da caça se instala: quando mais eu, com todo o meu ser, tento obedecer ao animal, mais me converto, corpo e alma, em borboleta. Quanto mais perto estou de cumprir o desejo de caçador, mais esta borboleta ganha a forma da vontade humana. No final, é como se a captura fosse o preço que tenho que pagar para recuperar minha existência humana. (...) No regresso da caça, o espírito da criatura condenada toma posse do caçador" (ACL 67).

When Mariamar, trapped in her house, is struck dumb with rage, she tears apart a chicken with her bare hands, her mouth unable to scream: "Grito por ajuda, mas apenas um cavernoso bramido se solta de mim. E é então que emerge a esperada sensação: um raspar de areia no céu da boca como se me tivessem enxertado uma língua de gato"(ACL 91). Mariamar's secret love of writing becomes her "mask" to the world in which "numa terra em que a maioria é analfabeta, causa estranheza que

seja exatamente uma mulher que domina a escrita" (ACL 96). She learns to "read" not in missionary school, but before: "aprendi a ler foi com os animais", where "ler" in this context means "to understand: "As primeiras histórias que escutei falavam de bichos selvagens. Fábulas me ensinaram, a vida inteira, a distinguir o certo do errado, a destrinçar o bem do mal. Numa palavra, foram os animais que começaram a fazer-me humana" (ACL 96). As Mariamar learns the alphabet with her grandfather introducing objects for letters, she learns the letter "L" of a lion's claw, and in recognizing the word "a fera se ajoelhava a meus pés" (ACL 97). Words and writing "num mundo de homens e caçadores" became "minha primeira arma" (ACL 97).

The presence of the lions in Kulumani is also seen as a consequence of war: when "as pessoas tornaram-se animais e os animais tornaram-se gente" (ACL 119). As the war progressed, dead bodies were fed upon by the lions, which learned that humans were good to eat. They became the manifestation of man's fear, which has become greater than their actual threat. An ex-soldier compares this exaggerated fear of lions with the same feelings exposed when the Portuguese soldiers were afoot: "os portugueses não tinham força para nos vencer. Por isso, fizeram com que as suas vítimas matassem a si mesmas" (ACL 120). The lions here symbolically represent a blind fear.

The fear of lions, then, is partly a fabrication of the mind, and when one speaks of "fabricated lions" this fear does not lie far from it. Used to accuse others of witchcraft, the hunt for the material that is used for creating lions can include "desperdícios da modernidade urbana" (ACL 155) including battery acid, old mobile phones, and computer screens. The fact that this kind of "garbage" is found most likely in the homes of those who have been able to buy them implies that the witch-hunt is mostly based on material envy. As the true nature of the problems in the village begins to reveal itself, Aracanjo (the avenging archangel?) has a dream in which the lions are parishioners in a church and he is called upon to kill a person instead of a lion. He recalls the same soulful light in the eyes of the lioness he has failed to kill with that of a girl (Mariamar) he saw in the village.

Couto's use of dream-states and insanity embedded in the very act of storytelling allows for the uncovering of certain truths that may otherwise be difficult to confront, both on a personal level as well as a social and political one. As he explains in his preface, the true nature of abuses occurring in the village was revealed when outsiders came to kill the lions. Couto has, in a variety of essays including "O Planeta das Peúgas Rotas" called for a renewed personal responsibility, calling to task not only politicians but individual citizens to look for the truth, it its many forms. The lions can be viewed as a "powerful poetic force" of the "magic of the world" (Couto, *Interinvenções* 90), but we also need to recognize that depending upon a magical "boa sorte" "faz com que nos demitamos da nossa responsabilidade individual e colectiva" (Couto, *Interinvenções* 92) and that real economic forces are frequently obscured in the process.

If, as Couto points out, it was the "caça que nos fabricou como espécie criativa e imaginativa" (Couto, *Interinvenções* 76), it is also the hunt for the animal that has uncovered real human social conditions. And just as Ty finally comes to terms with his animal place in this new world, abdicating his role as superior animal ("I'm through with contradictions" (FOE 349)), he is no longer the eco-warrior fighting indeed his consumer human self but comes to a kind of state of grace conferred by the realization that his "wild" Patagonian fox has transformed itself into a domesticated "dog" and that he, by extension, is "a human being" (FOE 349). Humans are physically humbled by their non-human counterparts: The lions come equipped to kill and any wild animal can survive in its natural habitat without the tools a human would find necessary. As both authors explore, the conceptual inferiority of animals needs to be challenged, as well as the humanist idea that being human involves somehow reneging one's animal affinities. "Environmental ethics must learn a language that leaps away from the motifs of humanism, perhaps by drawing on the discourse of ontological humility found in primal cultures, postmodern philosophy, and medieval contemplative traditions" (Manes 26).

Chapter Six: Development and Progress: Creation of the Posthuman

> SUBJECT: FAMOUS AUTHOR PROVIDES A SNAPSHOT
> OF ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT
> "(...) Couto was frank and candid in his assessment of environmental enforcement in Mozambique. If he is correct, and there is no reason to doubt him, the lack of scientific information and trained managers, along with corruption, hampers environmental enforcement. Programs providing assistance in conducting scientific studies and in training government officials in enforcement would help meet the gaps noted by Couto."
> - From the wikileaked cable No. 09MAPUTO521.[26]

While doing research for this thesis, I came across the above "leaked" cable, in which Couto "the famous author" was asked to give his opinion on the state of environmental enforcement in Mozambique. Of course, it is Couto's expertise as a biologist and environmental assessment expert in that country that he is consulted, and not as an author. However, it does point out the importance that his role as a well-know writer has given him in helping to expose environmental problems in his own country. The most important information gleaned from this "leaked" cable is that Couto is a proponent of scientific studies in general and compliance specifically, ideas that he has put forth in many articles and essays for years. The fact that this information was "leaked" gives it a veneer of authenticity and transparency regarding the less-than-ideal actions of government entities responsible for the environmental well being of the country. It also speaks of a feeling of apparent danger involved in the "frank and candid" divulging of such opinions to the public in general, denouncing corruption and lethargy found in areas of the relatively new government whose job it is to manage the development of Mozambique's environmental resources. More importantly, Couto is emphatic in defending a concept of the environment that *intrinsically* involves the well-being of the

[26] http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/04/09MAPUTO521.html. Accessed 18/12/2012. Web.

population, and not an imported concept of environmental defense which pits local populations against efforts to preserve biodiversity:

> "O nosso desafio maior era encontrar na biodiversidade razões para começar programas geradores de riqueza, pontes com a modernidade. De modo que o tal biodiversidade transitasse de conceito para semente e no final, germinasse isso que se chama desenvolvimento" (Couto, *Pensageiro* 26).

"One of the central tasks of postcolonial ecocriticism as an emergent field has been to contest – also to provide viable alternatives to – western ideologies of development" (Huggan and Tiffin 27). But is the term 'development' just a "disguised form of neocolonialism", as they and others suggest?[27] How is development defined and measured, and whose interest does it serve? And in what way is development connected to the environment? Can negative aspects of development be counteracted by sustainable (presumably positive) ones? In what way are the ideas of "progress" and "development" understood in the works of Couto and Boyle? Is a North/South divide created using such terms and is tradition always pitted against notions of progress?

The word "development" is itself filled with connotations both positive and negative. Designators such as "developed countries" (mostly in the Northern Hemisphere) and the "developing countries" (mostly in the Southern Hemisphere) imply that some countries have the status of adulthood (are mature, grown-up, and knowledgeable) while others are still in a kind of child's growth mode: implied is a less "advanced" in capitalist economy, but also politically and socially backward and in need of guidance, according to western ideologies. Implicit in this is that the "developed country" has the ability to supply technical and economic "aid" to countries that are "developing," and that this assistance has strings attached. That development could be, as De Rivero opines, no more than a "myth propagated by the West that, under the guise of assisted modernization, reestablishes the very rift (social, political, economic) between First and Third Worlds that it claims to want to heal" (Huggan and Tiffin 28) emphasizes the "othering" necessary in order understand it at all. Post Second World War rhetoric "invented development" as a result of

[27] "The contemporary project to "develop" the third world is largely an exercise in neocolonialism" (Curtin 57).

a variety of historical factors including "decolonization; the pressures of the cold war; the need to find new markets; and faith in modern science and technology as a panacea for social and economic ills" (Huggan and Tiffin 28).

More generous usage of the word involves its use to describe "*human* development" inasmuch as it focuses on helping humans to overcome "poverty, social unrest (and) political repression" (Huggan and Tiffin 29). Of course, how to go about this is another question altogether, and, as has been argued previously, the hubris of assuming to know the correct way to intervene without worsening a situation in the future is part of the exercise of restraint. The value structures that are the basis of definitions upon which development enacts is central to this discussion. Is it a persistent "colonial mentality" (Huggan and Tiffin 31), which puts a higher value on the industrialization of societies ("advancement") rather than on subsistence-based communities? And is the use of such terms as "sustainable development" just another way to re-clothe "development," making it more palpable to a more radical public, as Wolfgang Sachs suggests? (Huggan and Tiffin 31). *Sustainable* development introduces the concept of *environmental* preservation, but only in as much as it places a monetary value on that environment, and thus its degradation should be stopped if only in order to preserve continued economic benefits. Who truly benefits is, of course, part of the problem that must be addressed.

As writers, both Boyle and Couto explore the ways in which concepts of industrial and capitalist development and the "natural" environment interact in the social fabric of their novels, speaking from economic opposites of the globe. Boyle's California, the place of technological advances and consumer culture, also must deal with dwindling resources and the place that local human exploitation has in maintaining this high-level of consumer comfort (as is explored in *The Tortilla Curtin*), a level of progress that has as a consequence the apocalyptic environmental collapse in *A Friend of the Earth* (and developed further in the following chapter). Development in Couto's works studied here must take into consideration the aftermath of both colonial and civil wars and a mostly rural and oral population which still exist in small communities living off

subsistence farming. Development is explored as part of the forces of the city and processes of industrialization, but literacy and translation are also aspects of societal progress that are explored and redefined as a part of the nation-building project. So that while Boyle's novels place an inevitable capitalist greed as the source of America's "fall", Couto's works reflect an alternative view to the procession of human development from the aftermath of colonial occupation, siding with the theoretical basis of what Louise Westling calls "animot posthumanism," as will be explained further in this chapter. American consumer society makes the acquisition of goods (cars and homes, especially) work counter to the needs of environmental preservation. Boyle's works *A Friend of the Earth* and *The Tortilla Curtain* transmit, I believe, a sense of the inevitable greedy nature of man: We will survive as best we can, but it is our nature to destroy ourselves because the American pursuit of happiness necessarily means the amassing more things. Couto's view is less pessimistic: he expresses that there is hope in the younger generation, which is to respect local learning but to embrace scientific literacy as a necessary tool for the future. Both modes of thinking are necessary for social progress in a developing nation susceptible to lawless exploitation. Couto dreams of a Mozambique where the riches are spread around:

> "O meu anseio não é apenas ver moçambicanos ricos no verdadeiro sentido da palavra riqueza. O meu anseio é ver todos os moçambicanos partilhando de uma mesma riqueza. Só essa riqueza nos fará mais pessoas e mais humanos" (Couto, *Interinvenções* 99).

The “riches” to which he refers is not only monetary but also cultural and environmental. Mozambique can still boast, by its very *lack* of infrastructural developments and populations, one of the world’s most biodiverse and awe-inspiring regions: “É aqui, em Matutuíne, que mora uma das regiões mais ricas de Moçambique. Rica em diversidade de espécies e afortunada em paisagens (...)” (Couto, *Pensageiro* 26-27). Here, the population humorously refer to the elephants that invade their *machambas* (vegetable gardens) as “biodiversidade” as in “A biodiversidade passou ali” (28). They are rightly suspicious of a foreign word that does not apparently include humans:

> “Biodiversidade? O tradutor hesitou. O esgar no rosto traduzia o esforço para encontrar no léxico do xironga um equivalente para biodiversidade. Traduziu por

> elefantes. Depois, emendou: os bichos. Sentados no chão, os camponeses não disfarçaram a desconfiança. Fossem elefantes, fosse bicharada o assunto merecia um pé atrás. Então e as pessoas?" (25).

The potential economic importance of preserving the region's biodiversity (as viewed by the "experts" and "consultants" that have come from the city) comes into direct conflict with the everyday needs of the population to survive. As Couto observes, in the absence of infrastructures ("É uma das regiões menos desenvolvidas do país" (25)), the inhabitants are forced to live at the expense of the biodiversity. Here, he envisions "development" to mean a kind of two-way bridge or connection, which would both give and take wealth to and from the region, and not merely a sacking of resources.

Miraginações: Parables of Progress

In *Terra Sonâmbula*, the sacking of the land and animals is a frequently recurring theme. One particular *miraginação* (a mirage + imagination or dream/memory) episode, Kindzu views the sea drying up and then replaced by a savanna of palm trees full of fruit. The men, machetes in hand, run to cut the fruit that "parecia eram cabaças de ouro, cada uma pesando mil riquezas" (TS 27). A voice stops them and asks "que os homens ponderassem: aqueles eram frutos muito sagrados" and that "se poupassem as árvores: o destino do nosso mundo se sustentava em delicados fios. Bastava que um desses fios fosse cortado para que tudo entrasse em desordens e desgraças se sucedessem em desfile" (TS 27). Chastising the voice emanating from the tree, a man asks it "porque és tão desumana?" He received no reply, and the mass of people fall upon the fruits, which, when cut, fill the earth once again with water, drowning everyone in the process. Land overuse and deforestation are real problems in some parts of Mozambique, with land erosion resulting in flooding and mudslides. The need to override short-term individual use may at first seem to be "desumana" but is essential in order to secure long-term usage, since the biosphere is a complex system of interdependencies. Once upset, a series of disasters may ensue.

This memory/dream starts the beginning of Kindzu's journey, looking, with a conflicting will, for both a place untouched by war and a desire to join the *naparamas*[28], the warriors of justice. These desires, in the world Couto describes, are diametrical opposites: the desire for peace and stability, of maintaining place, working against the desire for justice, with its implicit conflict. The youthful desire to participate in this violent form of progressive resolution makes less and less sense with the passage of time, the *naparamas* more and more elusive. What both impulses do share is the need to leave the homeland. The journey away – like the journey home – paratextually recalls great epic tomes ("A primeira epopeia da literatura – a história de Ulisses – é a narrativa de um regresso" Couto, *Interinvenções* 78.) but unlike them, insists that the journey to the future must involve the imagination.

A similar conflict is found in Mariano's family in *Um Rio Chamado Tempo, Uma Casa Chamada Terra,* each uncle/brother representing different attitudes regarding what 'progress' means in Mozambique. Tio Ultímio (last uncle) is the capitalist who uses his political connections in order to increase his personal wealth, his ostentation more important than common sense when he brings his luxury automobile to the island where it is quickly buried in the sand: "Quem traria viatura da cidade para uma ilha sem estrada?" (RCT 28). Fulano Malta, Mariano's father (his name meaning, loosely, the pissed-off masses) was an ex-revolutionary, "oposto à injustiça colonial" (RCT 16), while Tio Abstinêncio (uncle abstinence) was thin and "engomado, ocupado a trançar lembranças" (RCT 17), shutting himself off from active involvement in civic affairs. Seen in parabular mode, each brother is representative of a way of addressing the push for nationhood couched in individual disposition. The fight (Fulando Malta), the flight (Tio Abstinêncio) and the might (Tio Ultímio). Mariano is, however, part of the new generation making his own sense of the world he quite literally "inherits" in the form of *Nyumba-Kaya* (house-house), which is both a real place as well as symbolic of the *oikos* (earth home) as mentioned in previous chapters.

[28] The *naparamas* represent a mystical warrior who uses more than just guns to fight.

Tio Ultímio's notion of progress insists in the commodification of the house and the land while the other brothers, romantic and melancholic Abstinêncio and the zealous defender Fulano stay to protect it in Mariano's absence so that he can "visitar o mundo" (RCT 248). The responsibilities of the older generation are in keeping with preservation while the younger generation has as its task to see what lies beyond the confines of house/nation. "Você pensa que somos a geração da traição. Pois você verá a geração que se segue. Eu sei o que estou a falar..." so says Ultímio to Mariano, who replies, "Isso que chama de geração eu também sou dessa geração" (RCT 249). Counteracting Ultímio's cynical view of youthful ambition, Mariano makes a stand for his generation, emphasizing that his world-view is progressive in that it is proposes the defense of his homeland from those who would sell it out from under his feet.

It is the absence of the trappings of the modern world on the island (like most of Mozambique, whose population lives mostly in rural substance environments) that humanely sheds light on the consumer society of "the city": A colorful scarf "from the city" is given to a blind woman who vainly uses it although she cannot see (RCT 19); the replacing real flowers for plastic ones from the city because plastic "é que é a eternidade" (RCT 97); and even the idea that the white bags of cocaine must be fertilizer makes perfect sense in a place where growing food is the way to produce wealth: "Disseram que aqueles sacos trariam a riqueza para a terra de Luar-do-Chão (...) que podia ser senão adubos, estrumes que eles fabricam lá nas cidades?" (RCT 172). This event, narrated by Mariano the elder, who, through automatic writing, "speaks" to Mariano that the reason why he has come back home is to save it from the "manure" found on the outside (elements from the city who would use it and abuse its inhabitants): "faltava-nos um que viesse de fora mas fosse de dentro" (RCT 173).

Um Rio Chamado Tempo, Uma Casa Chamada Terra, written in 2002, can in this light be seen as a appeal to bring the native children home from the beyond the borders of Mozambique. After the civil war drove many away from their homelands (the time period surrounding *Terra*

Sonâmbula), Mozambique became one of the poorest nations in the world, subject to every kind of calamity:

> "A Natureza fez alternar longas secas e violentas tempestades; o Homem provocou guerras e massacres. Muitos moçambicanos refugiaram-se nos países vizinhos e um número muito elevado de "deslocados" – os que deixaram as suas terras por causa da guerra – instalaram-se na periferia das grandes cidades" (Afonso 29). The brain drain, which followed the colonial and civil wars, left Mozambique with few qualified professionals[29], and land exploitation was at the mercy of fast-moving "entrepreneurs" who quickly took advantage of the lack of government controls (Hatton 81). But complete dependence on "qualified" professionals needs also to include recognizing other ways of seeing that only by being emotionally *of the land* imparts".

Couto returned to the theme of development and environment in both *A Chuva Pasmada* (2004) and *O Último Voo do Flamingo*. In *A Chuva Pasmada,* scientific reasoning could quickly and reasonably point to a factory as the source of pollution (causing the rain to freeze, effectively "shocked" in the air) the occurrence allows for an exploration of beliefs systems which invite the reader to think beyond the merely scientific. As an allegory of progress itself in that it represents the more negative and imperialist aspects of modern industrialization: the factory is powered by the river, but when the river dries up (presumably because the factory has emitted a toxic fume which causes the water to stay suspended in the air rather than fall to the ground), the factory looses its source of energy and stops working. Unable to generate energy, the factory stops emitting fumes, the water falls normally once again and the river flows. The story, however, is not really about an ecological disaster, but about revelations surrounding love and death, the growing tension of a suspended rain mirroring the unraveling of a secret. Progress is defined not so much by economic "advancement" (the factory) but by the uncovering of secrets (transparency), the unburdening of one's heart (love), and the release of fears surrounding death (nature).

In *O Último Voo do Flamingo,* the story calls to attention the abuses committed by outside intervention of the NGOs, which ends up doing more harm by feeding a system of corruption. The

[29] As an indicator, there were reportedly only three Mozambicans with PhDs in Biology in 2001 (Hatton 56).

continued existence of land mines, a constant reminder of the war, makes the simple act of walking outside a dangerous prospect, not because of the wild animals but because of the gaping holes that can open up underneath one at any time, tearing one limb from limb. The incentive to remove the mines is relatively low, since their continued presence in the ground ensures that money continues to flow from the NGOs whose mission it is to ensure they are removed.

"Progress is our most important product"[30]

In stark contrast, the highly technological ambience described in Boyle's novels set in modern day California offers a cynical view of the spoils of capitalist society at the turn of the century and reflect the American mindset in nature/environmental thinking that began in the 1970s, when popular environmental movements – from the more benign Sierra Club to the more radical Earth First![31] – brought environmental concerns into the popular culture, but which nevertheless continue to view nature and the environment as external to the continuing humanist idea of what it means to be human since Descartes. Despite the existence of new theories such as posthumanism, which effectively challenge an anthropocentric viewpoint of the world, these ideas have not entered into popular American culture. Boyle's work studied here both reflects and reflects upon the place of the human as combatively *apart* from nature. Theory, it would seem, could help to find a way out of this either/or duality:

> "The field (of ecocriticism) is *under*theorized, it is marked especially in the U.S. by a virile privilege in *unconscious* collusion with imperial and industrial forces, it often relies upon a naive realism and an unconscious Cartesian separatism of the human 'Me' from the exoticized 'Not Me' of a *static* and *reified nature*, and it has

[30] Quote by Ronald Reagan in *A Friend of the Earth* (135), before he was president and before he hired James Watt as secretary of the interior, one of the most controversial and anti-environmental political appointees of all time.

[31] **The Sierra Club**, famously founded in 1892 by conservationist and preservationist John Muir, has a broad-based grassroots membership which favors legal and political methods in order to "explore, enjoy and protect the wild places of the earth" through education and using "all lawful means to carry out these objectives" (from the Sierra Club Mission Statement available at www.sierraclub.org). **Earth First!** is a radical environmental "movement" in direct oppostion to the "namby-pamby environmental groups" whose methods of engagement are most famously in that of direct action: civil disobedience and monkeywrenching. As their name asserts, their call to arms is "the Earth comes first." (from the Earth First! website www.earthfirst.org/about.htm) .

> yet to seriously engage the technologized urban (environments) where most of its practitioners live" (Westling 28, my emphasis).

What can be observed in many of Boyle's urbanite main characters are concerns for an environment that is quite clearly outside themselves and in need of defense, but that, without a radical shift in paradigm, such concerns are merely a continuation of the same human-centered thinking that created such a mess in the first place. Ty's early fight to save the environment is in fact no more than a mid-life crisis to misbehave ("he needed an awakening, a cause, a call to arms" FOE 80.), to meet women ("Save the world, sure, and get laid too" FOE 82.), and give vent to his personal inner rage ("There were scores to be settled" FOE 265). The urban environment in which he lives is filled with technology, to the point of excessively prolonging their lives, creating the "young-old": old people who, providing they have enough cash, are able to replace failing body parts, allowing them to live longer. Future Ty, like many of the young-old, now lives among the over-populated condo dwellers: "Criminals. Meat-eaters. Skin-cancer patients. People who know more about animals – or nature, or the world that used to be – than their computer screens want them to know" (FOE 9). Boyle sees a future in which nature is not only outside of the human, but is mediated and controlled – by a computer screen and by *someone.* And, significantly, nature is viewed as somehow being *in the past* and no longer in the present, exemplified by the animals and plants that have gone extinct due to human intervention.

In *When the Killing's Done,* the character of Alma continues along the same lines of reasoning, elevating human decision, and thus human impact on the earth – its development – as forces to be moderated and controlled, lest the animals perish on our watch. Both Alma and Ty, and even Dave LaJoy maintain the same philosophical position of human centrality. And while Ty is contrite and full of self-loathing ("For the better part of my life, I was a criminal. Just like you." (FOE 55), Alma is more confident in her role as savior, only occasionally having existential doubts as to her scientific (if not god-given) right to kill some in order to save others, "a killer in the service of something higher, of restoration, redemption, salvation, but a killer all the same" (WTKD

236). In either case, there is never a question of the necessity of human agency to do the deed: to save or to kill, either way, it is up to the humans to decide what to do.

Not to belittle the need for environmental consciousness, it does seem to be too little, too late in both *When the Killing's Done* and *A Friend of the Earth*, because the insatiable drive for more that capitalist society needs in order to survive, leads unerringly to apocalyptic ends. Ty's shopping list of the daily habits of Westerners is based on the accumulation of things produced by industrialization "And just like you – if you live in the Western world, and I have to assume you do, or how else would you be reading this? – I caused approximately two hundred fifty times the damage to the environment of this tattered, bleeding planet as a Bangladeshi or Balinese" (FOE 55). The presumed reader, a consumer living in the Western world, is equally guilty of environmental degradation by being a part of this unquestioned system of consumption, the quest for progress defined by physical comfort and the amount of things one has. Those living in a so-called 'developing country' are off the hook.

These views are consistent with what Frederick Turner identified as a quintessentially American view of nature and culture as dual opposites where "the polluter and the ecology freak are two faces of the same coin; they both perpetuate a theory about nature that allows no alternative to raping it or tying it up in a plastic bag to protect it from contamination" (Turner 45). The very commodification of nature serves as the foundation for certain environmental groups. Ty contemptuously exposes the fact that Earth First! supporters are trying to assuage their consumer guilt by donating money, also criticizing the marketing angle groups use to raise money (mugs and t-shirts with the logos for sale), not to mention the big salaries that spokespeople for the organization earn. In *The Tortilla Curtain*, Delany writes a nature column whose focus is on "celebration, not lectures, not the strident call to ecologic arms, not the death knell and the weeping and gnashing of environmental teeth. The world was full of bad news. Why contribute more?" (34). Nature/the environment is the "exotic 'Not Me'" and is exploited for just this reason by both sides of the ideological fence, but without any real integration in sight. This disconnect is, at times, hugely

cynical. Dave LaJoy made the money he uses to defend animal rights by selling home entertainment systems to an elite community that spends increasingly less and less time outdoors among the animals themselves: "(...) appealing to a need rather than a want, the society closing down day by day, people investing in home entertainment because they're increasingly reluctant even to go out into the backyard, let alone to the movie theater or anyplace else" (WTKD 70). And pregnant América is exposed to harmful chemicals while she polishes decorative buddhas, a fact which most likely contributed to her child being born blind (TTC 137).

Two Versions of the Posthuman

Alternatives to a human-centered worldview are a version of posthuman theory, which Louise Westling proposes – *Animot Posthumanism*. This theoretical perspective "helps to define the human place within the ecosystem by interrogating or erasing the boundary that has been assumed to set our species apart from the rest of the living community" (Westling 30). The role of science is crucial to this way of thinking as new information from the natural sciences (from James Lovelock's popular Gaia Hypothesis to neuroscientist António Damásio's groundbreaking work on the neurological connection between body and mind, emotion and reason[32]) forces us to be more humble in our presumptions on the singularity of human life. As Westling asserts "this kind of science is gradually shaping an environmentally responsible world view that represents one of the great paradigm shifts of intellectual history" (Westling 35).

Posthumanism thought, according to Westling, can be divided into essentially two different discourses: the first being the aforementioned *Animot Posthumanism* and the second, the Techno or *Cyborg Posthumanism*, famously put forth in Donna Haraway's Cyborg Manifesto (1985). This idea of the posthuman proposes a virtual human who, with the use of computers, is not limited by the confines of the body and the immediate environment found around oneself. Computers create virtual identities and genetic engineering can alter the original human form. But, as Westling notes,

[32] *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain* (1994).

> "A redefinition of our species as beings fused with the technologies and media experiences we have designed as tools seems only further elaboration of the Cartesian mechanistic definition of humans as transcendent minds manipulating a realm of material otherness. Such a posthuman vision does nothing to address the dilemmas posed by a threatened environment, but instead implies that we can escape involvement in the rhythms of growth and decay in the biosphere" (Westling 29).

It is a similar plight observed by Orr who notes[33] that modern humans are more and more involved in indirect and controlled experiences of nature, which can develop into full-blown biophobia (fear of nature and natural environments), thereby alienating themselves from an affinity with other forms of live (biophilia).

Animot posthumanism, on the other hand, seeks to dethrone the human mind at the center of the universe, focusing instead on that aspect of human-ness that we share with the rest of the biosphere. The term "animot" is taken from Derrida's meditation on the relationship between humans and animals, *Geschlecht II*. This choice is, according to Westling, not accidental but means

> "to capture some of that bewildering range of beings and states, punning on the French plural for 'animal' (*animaux*) and also calling attention to the limitations of words in human languages for naming the many Others with whom we share the world" (Westling 31).

Westling's animot posthumanism seeks to take into account a more fully participatory and ecological worldview than Derrida's, by rejecting his humanist claim that only humans have language, can think, and have hands with which to create handicrafts (Westling 32). To this end, Westling finds that the scientific acceptance of human as animal (Darwin) is neatly expressed by philosopher John Dewey who believed that "the long biological history that humans share with all other life means that we continue to be fully interrelated with and immersed within that living community" (33). Westling completes her definition of animot posthumanism by pointing to Merleau-Ponty's "environmental turn in philosophy," which, with the help of scientific discoveries,

[33] David W. Orr argues in "Love it or Lose it: The Coming Biophilia Revolution" that humans are at a turning point, where biophilia is a cultural *choice*: if it is innate, as Wilson affirms, it must be relearned; if it is not than it must be taught.

would expose the "thoroughly integrated dynamism of living things" so much so that "human/animal inter-twining and the many kinds of sentience of non-human beings seem undeniable conclusions" (34).

The future presented in *A Friend of the Earth* demonstrates one possible scenario of the biotic (techno) posthuman world: an extension of the human lifespan by producing the young-old who, for a price, can replace body parts as they begin to degrade. Perhaps not ironically, the prolonging of Ty's life accompanies the degradation of the rest of the biosphere. But Ty-the-younger's affinity with the natural world brings him in opposition to fellow humans, since he believes (as indeed many do) that the problem facing the environment today is due in part to human overpopulation. He dreams of a "final solution" that would kill off most of the life on the earth "A comet would hit. The plague, mutated beyond all recognition, would come back to scour the land. Fire and ice" (FOE 308). The survivors would "build the new uncivilized civilization on the ashes of the old. No more progress. No more products. Just life" (FOE 308). Ty-the-older, having gotten his apocalyptic wish, desires a return to the past he previously scorned "there is nothing I want, except the world the way it was, my daughter restored to me, my parents, all the doomed and extinguished wildlife of America (...) I don't want to live in this time. I want to live in the past. The distant past" (FOE 330). Rita in *When the Killing's Done* has a similar lament, reflecting on her former, youthful ambition "gone inward, where it glowed like the last unquenchable ember in the stove. What did she love? Her people: Anise, Bax, Francisco. This place, where nature came at you in the raw, unmediated, untenanted, and you lived life in the moment. The flock" (WTKD 153). These moments of clarity and grace (dare I say happiness) seem to be granted only when the human has recognized both her/his small temporal part in a greater complex world held together by ties of love that stretch from their children to the surrounding environment.

While Boyle's characters and stories more closely accompany Techno Posthumanism, Couto's work finds an affinity in Westling's Animot Posthumanism but extending it by including the animal and spirit realm as part of the larger ecosystem that de-centers the human. *A Varanda do*

Frangipani, peppered with episodes of communion with the earth, confronts the borders between life and death, singularity and community, dream and reality:

> "Agora era o último momento em que eu podia mexer no tempo. E fazer nascer um mundo em que um homem, só de viver, fosse respeitado. Afinal, não é o pangolim que diz que todo o ser é tão antigo quanto a vida?" (VDF 149) and "aos poucos, vou perdendo a língua dos homens, tomado pelo sotaque do chão" (VDF 152), and finally "tu serás aquele que sonha e não pergunta se é verdade" (VDF 145).

Couto's radical proposal for refocusing of the human spirit comes at a time when all is apparently lost in a postwar hell of material greed and corruption, abandonment of the elderly and disconnect with the land. The character of Marta most powerfully transmits this transition to the animot posthuman, having passed beyond the city where

> "eu lá adoecia de um mal que não tem nome. Era como se desaprendesse as mais naturais funções: escutar, olhar, respirar. Houve um tempo em que pensei poder mudar esse mundo. Mas hoje desisti. Aquele é um corpo que está vivo graças à sua própria doença" (VDF 128).

As the nurse of the asylum, she found a reason to live because "ali eu me exercia a bondades" and through it "me aproximava da família que eu há muito perdera" (VDF 129). For Marta, all crimes have their source in the war and ensuing violence, which dramatically changed the way people related with one another "os velhos foram expulsos do mundo, expulsos de nós mesmos" (VDF 127). The natural cycles of life are displaced "já não são anos, as estações que marcam as nossas vidas. Já não são as colheitas, as fomes, as inundações. A guerra instala o ciclo do sangue" (VDF 127).

Science and literature are used together to help question the "truths that we think we know about the earth, the environment and the assumptions regarding our separation from it (Couto, *Interinvenções* 61). At the same time, Couto envisions the need of a therapeutic national identity that turns its back on developmental policies bent on increasing individual wealth and embracing a posthuman worldview so necessary for late capitalist countries to embrace. Couto's work gains exceptional force not in its *magic* realism but in its *posthuman* realism, a radical leap in thinking

beyond the developed and decaying environmental apocalypse of Boyle's first world, the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Seven: Environmental Apocalypse and Natural Human Disasters

> "Chorais pelos dias de hoje? Pois saibam que os dias que virão serão ainda piores. Foi por isso que fizeram esta guerra, para envenenar o ventre do tempo, para que o presente parisse monstros no lugar da esperança" (The oracle in Couto's *Terra Sonâmbula* 215).

> "But then the larger form came down – much larger, a dark, streaking ball so huge and imminent the sky could never have contained it. There was a sound – sudden, roaring, wet – and then the forest was silent" (Ty describing his daughter's fall to her death in Boyle's *A Friend of the Earth* 336).

Part of my continuing interest in the shared focus of a postcolonial and ecocritical reading of a work of art comes from a deep conviction that artistic productions such as works of fiction can be instrumental in forming more informed world views regarding our particularly human place in the world and what we can (and are willing) to do to defend it. Stories of the environmental apocalypse may serve as prohibitory tales: to stem human actions lest they suffer the wrath of God or, more secularly, natural forces themselves. "We create images of doom to avert doom: that is the strategy of the jeremiad" (Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* 295). To avoid it, one must undergo some kind of reform, first as an individual and then as a group. As Buell has noted, of all natural metaphors (among them the tree, the web, the chain of life, natural selection, and, I would add to the list, the virgin land and roots) it is the apocalypse that is:

> "the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal" and it is "the rhetoric of apocalypticism that implies that the fate of the world hinges on the arousal of the imagination to a sense of crisis" (Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* 285).

This chapter seeks to explore the ways in which the two authors from opposite sites of the globe approach the subject of apocalyptic ends: Boyle's *A Friend of the Earth* and *The Tortilla Curtain,* and Couto's *Terra Sonâmbula* and *A Varanda do Frangipani.* How do the novels lead up to the

environmental and social catastrophe and are there any solutions offered to avert disaster? And to what extent, if any, are regional concerns brought into the global arena?

The Modes of Environmental Apocalypticism

It is in the secular framework that fears of nuclear holocaust (which have abated in recent years) have transformed into the more generalized environmental apocalypse:

> "The image of nuclear holocaust helped reactivate apocalyptic thinking precisely by providing a more convincing secular frame of reference for the apocalyptic paradigm than had been available since the so-called Enlightenment started to undermine the credibility of Christian sacred history" (Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* 299).

The globalized environmental crisis of global warming and the more recent news that we are reaching a global "tipping point" (the point at which, once reached, it is difficult to return to how things were previously) emphasize the apparent fragility of the biosphere in the face of human actions.

American environmental apocalypticism has as its literary source (according to Buell) in George Perkins March's *Man and Nature* (1864), a work that was greatly influential to later naturalists. Rachel Carson's haunting *Silent Spring*, a work of non-fiction about how the use of chemical pesticides enters the food chain, was undeniably instrumental in banning the use of DDT. Her environmental apocalyptic vision shares what Buell identifies as the "modes of perception" used to strengthen the force of the apocalyptic narrative: interrelatedness, biotic egalitarianism, magnification, conflation, and environmental peril (Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* 305). Interrelatedness refers to the far-reaching connections (the web, the rhizome) between natural elements – the complexity of which is still relatively unknown. So that what happens to one part of the biosphere (such as melting ice caps or the death of honey bees) can have disastrous effects on life living on the other side of the globe (or at the end of the food chain). Biotic egalitarianism is the belief that all life forms have a right to life, so that an environmental apocalyptic vision would be that the murder of hundreds of thousands of pigs and rats in *When the Killing's Done* could be

viewed as the equivalent of a genocidal holocaust. In such an environmental mindset, the killing off of humans (by their own tools of destruction) would be the best way to ensure the preservation of the rest of the biosphere. Ty is of this opinion ("to be a friend of the earth you have to be an enemy of people" (FOE 277) he says in order to justify the poisoning a human water supply) as is the town oracle in *Terra Sonâmbula* ("Terão que esperar que os assassinos sejam mortos por suas próprias mãos pois em todos haverá medo da justiça" TS 215). Such magnification and conflation follow the ecologist obsession for the small and minute, and the communion of the near with the far away. The smallest action can have a larger, unforeseen consequence, as when a voice in Kindzu's dream tells him "bastava que um desses fios fosse cortado para que tudo entrasse em desordens e desgraças se sucedessem em desfile" (TS 21). Finally, and most importantly, a sense of environmental peril must be present, with escape impossible. Ideally, it takes into account present day environmental disasters already frighteningly familiar to the reader: the fire and mudslide in *The Tortilla Curtain*, the magnificent raging storms in *A Friend of the Earth,* the floods and war in *Terra Sonâmbula.*

Mozambican Floods, Californian Fires

Mozambique, like many coastal countries with few financial resources and new infrastructures, stands most to lose as the impact of global warming increases. A rise in the sea level will cause more extreme flooding and long periods of drought, dramatically affecting the economic stability of the country, which relies upon unobstructed roadways in order to transport food from the country to the city.[34] Of course, changes in global climate are also dramatically affecting those living in more economically affluent parts of the world. Scientists looking at California's brush fires observe that the typical fire season has increased by almost two months over the past twenty years and that they burn for longer[35]. Combined with the urban housing sprawl built in hard to reach terrain, fires can more easily propagate and get quickly out of control.

[34] http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2012/climate-change-a-developing-challenge-for-poor-nations.html. 21/12/2012.

[35] http://www.thedailygreen.com/environmental-news/latest/Global-Warming-California-Wildfire-47102305. 21/12/2012.

The fact that both "developed" and "developing" countries are susceptible to the global forces of climate change – rather than a more localized environmental racism – is not lost on Couto who, reflecting upon "afropessimismo," recalls images of New Orleans after hurricane Katrina: "Essas imagens revelam um universo de miséria inqualificável, e denunciavam a paralisia da maior potência do planeta perante um pedaço de Terceiro Mundo"[36] (Couto, *Interinvenções* 135). They give evidence that the disaster is shared – a collective failure that can be viewed as an opportunity: "O que está desmoronado é todo um sistema que nos disse que se propunha tornarmo-nos mais humanos e mais felizes" (135). The environmental apocalypse is the unifying element, indifferent to the race, class, sex, nationality, and species affected. At the end of *The Tortilla Curtain*, the ground giving way under Cándido, the racial categories of black and white are stirred up together in the mudslide "the white face and flailing white arms, caught up in the mad black swirl of it like a man drowning in shit" (TTC 364). The apocalyptic vision of the end of days in *Terra Sonâmbula* holds that "até os miseráveis serão donos do vosso medo pois vivereis no reino da brutalidade" (TS 215). The thread that ties social injustice with environmental disaster is made even clearer by the fact that the fire in *The Tortilla Curtain* would not have begun at all had Cândido and América a proper to stay, and had not been forced to live outdoors. The irony of the fire occurring on Thanksgiving – from a fire made to cook a turkey that was cynically given away by wealthy customers – is not lost.

Indeed human agency of environmental apocalypse is central to the plot in Boyle's stories, and not without a touch of ironic humor that is characteristic of his writing. For the joke in *A Friend of the Earth* is not about the seriousness for the potential for environmental disaster itself, but more about the misguided attempts to save it. Ty's twisted logic drives him to burn down a forest in order to save it. Returning to the devastation he caused so many years before, Ty-the-older is confronted by the fire investigator who asks "And what did you accomplish?" to which Ty, at the climax of the novel declares:

[36] New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina is an oft citied example of environmental racism, where the majority of the population who lived in low lying areas were poor, African-Americans who did not have their own transportation in order to escape the storm, and were thus unable to leave quickly. Slow government response to aiding those affected by the environmental disaster is also touted as an example of environmental racism.

> "This is it, the point we've been working toward, the point of it all, through how many years and how many losses I can't begin to count, and the answer is on my lips like a fleck of something so rank and acidic you just have to spit it out: "Nothing." I say. "Absolutely nothing" (FOE 343).

Boyle comments upon the inevitability of California fires and the resignation that such awareness provokes in its natives: “the sun will shine, the wind will blow, your house will burn” (Boyle, “Apocalypse” par. 9). Here, as in The Tortilla Curtain, Boyle does not offer up any solutions but merely holds a mirror up to the reader who may, like he himself, feel empathy for victims but ultimately worry about the welfare of his own nuclear family: “My heart goes out to them, and then it comes back, selfishly, humanly, to me and my own” (Boyle, “Apocalypse” par. 4).

The Postcolonial Ecocritical Apocalypse

Near the end of *Terra Sonâmbula*, Kindzu's last notebook "As páginas da Terra" expose his state of mind after he is informed that the woman he loves, Farida, has died, either killing herself or murdered in order to "encomendar simpatias" (TS 290) with the local governor. Kindzu, in mourning, has a visionary dream that transmits secrets from another world. He desires his own death, but the dream itself is an apocalyptic vision of the end of days at the same time a catalogue of wartime atrocities committed in the then recent past. The oracle "olhou a terra como se dele dependesse o destino do universo" (292), echoing the idea of "a fusion of regionalism and globalism" and "its assertion that the fate of all living things hinges on a minor transaction taking place in a remote cultural niche"[37]. The oracle predicts that things will get worse as a result of the war: there will be no hope, only monsters in their place. Family members who have fled the country will no longer recognize those who stayed behind and more importantly, "vós vos convertêsteis em bichos, sem família, sem nação" (TS 292). Everything will become the property of foreigners "até o céu e o mar" and it will be a thousand times worse than colonial times because in this globalized era "não vereis o rosto dos novos donos e esses patrões se servirão de vossos irmãos para vos dar

[37] Although Buell was referring to Leslie Silko's novel *Ceremony*, in *The Environmental Imagination* (p. 286), I think this observation can equally be applied to Couto's *Terra Sonâmbula*.

castigo" (TS 293). The oracle describes present times in which fear and brutality reign and there is fear of justice. The dead will surface in order to claim body parts (ears and noses) that have been brutally removed and then eaten by wild animals. But then there will come a dawn in which light and a song will remind us of "uma raiz profunda que não foram capazes de nos arrancar" (TS 294). The singing voice would put things back into a natural order: the dead in their graves, the living transformed back into humans from the animals that the war had turned them into.

As the oracle ends his proclamation, the population is transformed into a variety of animals:

> "A fala foi a última coisa a ser convertida e, durante um tempo, se escutaram espantos e gritos humanos proferidos pelas mais irracionais bestas. Aos poucos, porém, também o verbo se perdeu e a bicharada, em desordem, se espalhou pelos matos" (TS 295).

The demotion to the state of animal is clearly negative: without the art of song and language, as animals they have lost the ability to communicate with one another as fellow human species: Babel ensues. The oracle's apocalyptic premonition is, however, a statement of the Mozambican present, cloaked in the allegory of natural and ecological disaster.

The end of *A Varanda do Frangipani* culminates in a similar apocalyptic end involving the machinations of the animal-spirit-guide pangolin and the spirit of the dead soldier in order to save the investigator, simultaneously serving as a metaphor for the salvation of the nation of Mozambique in the hands of the would be assassins:

> "(…) súbido, deflagrou a tempestade. Era coisa jamais presenciada: o céu pegou-se em fogo, as nuvens arderam e o mundo se aqueceu como uma fornalha. De repente, o helicóptero se incandesceu. A hélice se desprendeu e o aparelho, desasado, tombou como esses papeizinhos em chamas que não sabem se descem ou se sobem. Assim, envolto em labareda, a máquina se derrocou sobre as telhas da capela. Afundou-se onde se guardavam as armas. Foi então que uma explosão se tremendeou pelo forte, parecia o mundo se fogueirava (...) quando já tudo clareava sucedeu que, daquele depósito sem fundo, se soltaram andorinhas, aos milhares, enchendo o firmamento de súbitas cintilações" (VDF 149).

As the air clears, the forte's walls, which for the duration of the story are in ruins, are suddenly made whole and it is the frangipani tree, which has been carbonized by the lightening. The sacrifice

serves to wipe the slate clean and "fazer nascer um mundo em que um homem, só de viver, fosse respeitado" (VDF 149).

Children and the Environmental Apocalypse

At this writing, I am forced to reflect upon the aftermath of what has been the most horrible mass killing of school children in U.S. history by a lone gunman.[38] Its relevance to this section came clear to me when I began to understand that this occurrence is becoming all too commonplace and that the American public are becoming indifferent to "just one more" mass killing. Hopeful that this horrible event would herald approval of gun control legislation, very quickly it was obvious that most of the US congress was not interested in making any real changes and that in fact as a result more people are buying guns for personal protection. The sickening reply of one congressman was that if the schoolteachers had been armed, this would not have happened. Now *that* is an image to contemplate: a first-grade teacher carrying a gun. In *The Tortilla Curtain*, Delaney overcomes his neoliberal qualms and purchases a gun ("it was Judgment Day" TTC 326), finding that shopping for the "tools of murder" is almost a causal affair, the saleswoman "looked like a retired first-grade teacher, gray hair in a bun, silver-framed glasses" (TTC 353). If it is the undeniable ability for the human to adapt to and manipulate his and her environment – often toted as an exclusively human trait – then the psychological ability to become *anesthetized* to "the horror" is also one of the particularly human problems with confronting apocalyptic visions, especially when they touch upon children. The description of Mexican children foraging among garbage heaps in *The Tortilla Curtain,* easy victims of rape because they lack a safe home are worthy of an apocalyptic *now*. Likewise Miudinga and Tuahir (his adoptive uncle) in *Terra Sonâmbula* are war refugees walking through an apocalyptic landscape looking for shelter and food, but where Miudinga has lost his childhood ("o canto acabou por migrar de si" TS 12.) out of the necessity for survival. Lost childhood and lost children are part and parcel of the apocalyptic formula used by both Boyle and Couto.

[38] The Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting in Connecticut, USA, on December 14, 2012.

The presence of children in these novels presents an important problematic that is taken up by ecofeminist literary criticism, especially as it concerns the having and raising of children as the central concern over the mere conception of them. Murphy quotes Barbara Johnson: "How might the plot of human subjectivity be reconceived (so to speak) if pregnancy rather than autonomy is what raises the question of deliberateness?" (Murphy, *Ecocritical* 195). As Murphy summarizes:

> "Such a question (...) not only interrogates autonomy but also affirms relationship, and privileges nurturing over engendering to the degree that these two wholly interrelated phases of the parent/offspring relationship have been separated in Western culture since the time of the Greeks (...)" (Murphy, *Ecocritical* 195).

Children englobe a plethora of symbolic registers: rebirth, hope, the continuation of the species, a possibility of even having a future: the important trump in staying the hand of mass destruction. Like Sting's famous cautionary song against cold war nuclear proliferation in the 1980s ("I hope the Russians love their children too"), children in Boyle's work studied here serve as a common denominator to racial and economic differences. Pregnant América and Cándido (= candid, honest, pure[39]) are reminiscent of the story of Mary and Joseph among the Romans, homeless and looking for a place to bring Socorro (=Help) into the world. That she is born unseeing in a makeshift shack, assisted by Delany's cat ("You're the saint. You. You will be my midwife" TTC 292) reinforces the idea that the United States has become a Roman empire on the brink of social disaster. A second coming of the Messiah, the baby Socorro dies in the mudslide while Delaney is saved by Cândido, who, despite having lost all hope, instinctively – and humanely–reaches out to him.

The death of a child is also at the core of *A Friend of the Earth*, as Ty's emotional state is mirrored in the increasing environmental chaos that ensues. Sierra, his daughter, is saint-like, martyred to an environmental cause, having abdicated the biological imperative of having a family and children of her own. Like Socorro, she is symbolic of hope and renewal in the face of so much consumer greed. As Ty's only child, her death underscores his pessimistic view of the impending end of both the natural world and his own family, both deaths he feels at least partly responsible for.

[39] "Cándido's namesake is Candide. It helps me to have thesse mounting ironies" (Boyle, *Interview* 14:14).

Ty involving Sierra in dangerous environmental protests at an early age foreshadows her untimely death, the description of which is more reminiscent of an earth-killing asteroid rather than 'just' a woman falling out of a tree:

> "But then the larger form came down–much larger, a dark, streaking ball so huge and imminent the sky could never have contained it. There was a sound–sudden, roaring, wet–and then the forest was silent" (FOE 336).

At novel's end, an almost optimistic and recovering Ty meets a teenage girl who reminds him of his daughter while doing a 'normal' thing like walking a fox mistaken for a dog. The reviving woods, recovering wildlife, and the new generation of humans are all the life affirming moments that Boyle wants to leave us with, reminding us, as Ty does, that he is just "a human being."

The children in the apocalyptic landscape that is war-torn Mozambique in Couto's *Terra Sonâmbula* are even more closely tied to the fate of the land. Narrated alternatively by two young people who are coming of age during the war, Muidinga and Kindzu might even be true brothers. Tuahir, who finds Muidinga among other dead children awaiting burial, is tenaciously hanging on to life. Close to dying, Muidinga suddenly improves: "era uma criança a nascer, quase em estado de saúde. O velho se contenta: seus filhos já quase não deixavam memória. Sentia saudade de ser pai, era como se voltasse a ser jovem" (TS 77-78). He gives the child the same name as his eldest son, who had died working in the mines. Tuahir nurtures and educates Muidinga on how to survive, but it is Muidinga, remembering how to read, that has access to the past in the form of a Kindzu's journal. Kindzu, presumably dead by the time Muidinga finds his journals, has also lost his childhood in the war and goes searching for the mythical *naparama* warriors. On his way, he meets and loves Farida, who we learn is herself half of a "cursed twin". Twins, like albinos, are seen as having supernatural powers and are feared. "Na crença da sua gente, nascimento de gémeos é sinal de grande desgraça" (TS 101) and not following through with a cleansing ritual would result in "as chuvas deixariam de cair para sempre" – a real environmental calamity 'caused' by human actions – made specific by Farida's mother who did not do the proper ritual after giving birth to 'cursed' twins:

> "O lugarzinho, no enquanto, foi sendo alvo de desgraças. A terra caiu em desordem, sopraram ventos que arderam no sol, secaram fontes e lagos. As nuvens, medrosas, fugiram. A fome e a morte instalaram residência. Tudo aquilo acontecia, dizem, por causa da mãe não se ter purificado" (TS 104).

In a place of death and dying, the fort in *A Varanda do Frangipani*, Ernestina, living in the isolated asylum, is "rodeada de velhos, gente que só espera pelo breve e certeiro final" (VDF 105). Her first child is stillborn and when Marta becomes pregnant, she implores her to keep the baby so that they both might be mother(s) to the child. At the moment of its birth, however, Marta has a visionary dream in which vampire bats eat swallows mid-flight and the baby is aborted. As messengers of hope and beings who communicate with the dead, birds represent, as Afonso notes: "os estados superiores do ser, o conhecimento espiritual que permite a regeneração de um mundo arruinado ou as forças maléficas e o caos da guerra" (Afonso 369). Desiring for the birth of child by her husband's lover, Ernestina asks Marta to enter into a pact among women ("nós, ambas as mães!" (VDF 136)), both assuming the role of mother in the caregiving of the child. Here, Couto's story proposes a pact made of love and rebirth instead of base human greed represented by the vampire bats who would do away with them.

Visions to an End

Apocalypse as seen in these works can be viewed as a metaphor for a necessary change of global consciousness. But can these visions of the environmental apocalypse really help to forestall it? Improving scientific literacy, while necessary, does not seem to be the most important means of gaining popular support for the defense of "the environment," because such a view of nature continues to place humans as either acting upon the environment or being victims of it: in either case, external to one's identity as a human. Buell speaks of Carson's belief that, "salvific potential of industrialized society resides in (...) its scientific know-how" (Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* 296) but for both Boyle and Couto there is no such confidence. Boyle goes to great lengths to show that the scientific miracles of the 20th Century have done more to harm the environment than to save it, and that by the sheer number of people now able (due to scientific

advancements) to live past their natural life-span, overpopulation is in fact the major contributor to the current environmental crisis on the way to an inevitable disaster. The only message seems to be that humans are clever at picking up the pieces – at adapting – and that they will find a way to make bread without eggs, make a common catfish tasty and keep hoping that the next generation does better.

Couto's visions of the apocalypse are of the here and now, starting from a place where hunger and displacement caused by wars mark the worst state of human existence. The impossibility of fleeing such a reality is what identifies a true environmental apocalypse that both authors contend with. Couto's places for escape are isolated and defended by the land mines (*A Varanda do Frangipani*), created by the natural isolation of an island (*Um Rio Chamado Tempo, Uma Casa Chamada Terra*), or even provided by a shipwreck or a burned bus (*Terra Sonâmbula*), none of which provide true safety. For Boyle, the mountain cabin (*A Friend of the Earth*), the island (*When the Killing's Done*) and the suburbs (*The Tortilla Curtain*) equally speak of the impossibility of escape. In all cases, is the desire to escape from the corrupting forces of civilization, from both the symbolic and real "city" where "agora, tudo estava permitindo, todos os oportunismos, todas as deslealdades. “Tudo era convertido em capim, matéria de ser comida, reminada e digerida em crescentes panças" (VDF 113). Creating a defense from the corrupting outside seems the only solution: Salufo wants to re-mine (or, as he aptly puts it "plant" mines) around the fort in order to "fechar caminhos ao futuro" (VDF 114).

Rather than seeking escape and accepting the inevitability of an environmental catastrophe, a hero's action of attempting to "save the earth" is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Eight: Defending the Earth

In perhaps the very first anthology of ecocritical essays, Glotfelty called for a more ecocritial *literary* stance in criticism in general given the urgency of addressing global environmental crises: "How can we solve environmental problems unless we start thinking about them?" (Glotfelty e Fromm xxiv) and "Most ecocritical work shares a common motivation: the troubling awareness that we have reached the age of environmental limits" and also "How can we contribute to environmental restoration? (Goltfelty and Fromm xx). She wanted to see environmental consciousness do the same thing that feminism and multi-ethnic critical movements had done to transform the profession of the teaching of literature. "And because they have transformed the canon, they are helping to transform the world. Early American literary ecocritics felt that the essential fight was against the commodification of nature for use by humans and that a change in paradigm was essential: "We shall continue to have a worsening ecologic crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man" (White 14).

The project, for those working in the field of literary criticism as theorists and educators is still relatively new, especially in reflecting upon non-anglosaxonian literature. For works in the Portuguese language, which are written in and consider literary works in that language, such theorists are virtually non-existent in Portugal and African Portuguese speaking countries. It has only been in recent years that conferences focusing on ecocritical perspectives have been staged in both Portugal and Brazil.[40] Such perspectives are important in bringing into the field new ways of being in the world coming from the global South. Anthony Vital in "Toward and African Ecocriticism" calls attention to the ways in which social history and the natural world interact, and that "different languages (...) permit varieties of understanding" which in turn are the result of

[40] The first International Ecocritical Conference held in Brazil took place in August 2012; In Portugal, the first ecocritical conference was held in 2008. To the best of my knowledge, no such conference has been held in any other POLOP nation to this date.

"specific historical moments" which writers relate (Vital as quoted in Huggan and Tiffin 15). Taking this into consideration, what it means to be an activist in the defense of the earth necessarily takes on a variety of meanings depending upon the language and cultural setting within which it is set. So that the environmental activism starting in the 1960s in the United States is necessarily very different from that practiced in Kenya in 2005. The "decolonization of the mind" (a concept coined by Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o[41]) shares then the mission of shifting from the modes of thinking which give primacy to humanism, the dogma of the written word, and the deifying of modern technology. Here, terms such as "environmental justice" have been created in an effort to emphasize the equal importance that issues of poverty and racism have in regards to environmental ills, and that such factors cannot be seen as less fundamental nor divorced from a defense of the environment. These movements, such as the Green Belt Movement in Kenya, are less international in scope and are independent from the American environmental movement, using their own methods of civil disobedience (see both Nixon, *Slow Violence* 267 and Buell, *Future* 142).

Where writers like Couto and Boyle have contributed to the question of literary activism – the creation of texts, which consider aspects of colonial thinking in a wider environmental context – lies in the ways in which each writer absorbs and then deconstructs cultural ideas of defending the earth. Boyle, at the heart of the modern technological hub of California, critically reflects upon the ways in which the defense of the environment is used as a badge of cultural identification, a niche for white consumer guilt, and an important economy of its own. Couto, from the rural postwar nation of Mozambique, questions notions of traditionality and orality as they touch upon aspects of environmental health, and where defense of the earth involves reconciliation with the past, a "reinhabitation[42]" of the land, and an acceptance of human frailty in the greater scheme of things. For the marginalized populations, strategies of protest and civil disobedience frequently take the form of witchcraft and magic, as Couto explores in the novels discussed here.

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[41] *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature,* 1986.

[42] *Reinhabitation* is defined as learning to live-in-place in areas that have been disrupted and injured through past exploitation (Buell, *Future* 146).

The importance of the novel (of which both Couto and Boyle are, arguably authors) in this endeavor is central to disseminate 'dry' scientific information, making it more palpable to a public, which may not have the scientific training to otherwise understand, nor the patience required to plow through emotionally trying facts. As Hammar asserts, "fictional writing often portrays 'reality' more effectively than scientific work and/or makes it more accessible to the general public and/or decision makers" (Hammar 125). Such ecoliterary activism has played a significant role in informing and changing public opinion on complex subjects, as is frequently touted of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, which used scientific facts and creative literary metaphors in order to alert the American public to the pervasive dangers of chemical insecticides.

Jonathan Bate, in *Song of the Earth,* argues that it is only with *ecopoetics* than one can "speak" for nature and connect us once again to a belonging with the earth that has been lost since the Enlightenment. Hence, poetry matters to counteract the negative influence of technological consumption that Adorno and Horkheimer in *The Concept of Enlightenment* wrote was the result of alienation from nature (Bate 76). Like Glotfelty, Bate believes that the environmental movement is late in influencing literary critical studies because, unlike other movements that started in the 1960s, speaking *for* nature is an exercise in speaking for the "Other" (Bate 72). And while he warns that a man speaking of feminist issues, or a white woman speaking for colored affairs creates a problematic question of "speaking for the Other", in the case of an abstracted "nature", there is no other recourse than to represent manifestations of nature as an Other. Unless, of course, one ascribes to the idea of deep ecology, in which nature is *not* exterior to human, but is an intrinsic part of our identity, so that by "speaking for nature" we are simply "speaking for ourselves." Being able to "hear" nature/ourselves and "translate" that information is the exclusive domain of the ecopoet. Like Bate, "Couto's vision as a writer is to give back to the world its divine power, its power to create rather than merely nominate things" (Hammar 126). Many are the ecocritics who wonder what role literature can play in making real changes in ways of thinking: "How can a work of art, a thing of human making or, as the Greeks put it, poesis, speak, and in speaking, "save", the earth?" (Rigby

428). As Rigby suggests, the central role of poetry specifically is to remind us of our larger dimension of being, inclusive and connected to the world and not alienated from it: "The task of the poet is to look up from our worldly labors to the heavens measuring ourselves against the gods, to open ourselves to a wider ecocosmic dimension of our being" (Rigby 431). "Why do poets matter?" asks Bate. Because they remind us that we are not alone and that words – forming poems – contain stored energy, and that "Properly understood, poems can be studied as models for energy flow, community building, and ecosystems" (Ruckert 110).

This idea has intrigued me since I had read it not because of the thesis in itself – that *poesis* is the human conduit of speaking with the earth – but the assertion that poets matter *because* they are the ones who best "speak" the language of the earth at a time of global environmental crisis, where all hands are on deck, so to speak, in order to keep the (earth)ship from sinking.

In this regard, Couto and Boyle are very different representatives. For if Couto's sense of environmental activism exists, it is not in the global Northern sense that is reflected in Boyle's novels. What transpires is not a defense of the earth in the individualist, political sense. Rather, itself speaks *through* the characters that are more wholly conscious of their embeddedness into the fabric of the land. The earth is the sleepwalker, the earth is the home, and the frangipani is the onlooker. By calling this perspective "magic realism", the importance of the reality of this view – and thus its legitimacy – is diminished. The apparent oxymoron between the magic (not real) and realism (not magic) does not invite the reader to consider whether the dualistic states of existence are indeed compatible. As I have previously proposed, deep fiction seems to me more appropriate, forcing the issue of ecology into the discussion, where a rhizomic view of life is more to the point than the outdated notion that everything outside our empirical understanding of "reality" bears little regard. Indeed, this is the primary force that Couto brings to a Western reader of his work: the land itself is an active agent in its own defense. And while with Bolye's characters often repeat that they do not mean to preach (but then go ahead and do so anyway, to humorous effect), Couto's characters do not focus on defending *just* the land or *just* the people, but do both simultaneously. In

A Chuva Pasmada, the health of the community requires that the river flow unhindered by the industrialist's factory and the unwieldy weather itself unravels familial issues of love and betrayal. In *A Confissão da Leoa*, the fate of lions reveals the social inequality of women, and the creation of a vindictive magical fabricated lion, not unlike the Golem of Jewish folklore, or Frankenstein's monster. Human beasts created by matter and word – the magical incantation that runs counter to the project of humanists since the Enlightenment.

Pro-earth and Anti-human: The "population problem"

From an African critical perspective, social human concerns and environmental concerns are necessarily linked: Nixon's observation that in Kenya, "environmental erosion means the erosion of civil rights" (Nixon, *Slow Violence* 264) echoes Couto's use of the metaphor of erosion to illustrate the current state of *cultural* affairs: "Falamos da erosão dos solos, da desflorestação, mas a erosão das nossas culturas é ainda mais preocupante" (Couto, *Interinvenções* 45). In contrast, Boyle's American activists and environmentalist – Ty, Alma, LaJoy and Delaney – share in the (still) popular Malthusian view that it is overpopulation and the resulting scarcity of resources which seriously threatens the earth, thus problematically pitting humans against the environment, more specifically, people living in the so called third-world where populations are on the increase. Boyle himself seems to ascribe to this view:

> "Who is the enemy of the environment? We people, of any race or ethnicity, so anybody coming from anywhere. The higher the population, the higher the pollution, the fewer (the) animals, the less open land. So the problem remains insoluble" (Boyle, *Interview* 7:35).

And

> "The declining resources of this world: we have seen in the last 20 years ethnic cleansing in Eastern Europe and elsewhere – in Africa. These are tribal wars of ethnic groups against ethnic groups fighting to the death for the last resources. If there were fewer of us of any group, there would be lots more resources, a lot more open space, a lot more animals, so the situation is complicated far beyond national politics" (Boyle, *Interview* 9:15).

Population increase reaching "critical" levels has been reported *ad nauseam* by the media this past year, graphically exposing the areas of the world that have large "uncontrolled" populations. As Deane Curtin puts it succinctly, the persuasive argument against an increase in human population places the "responsibility for the looming crisis of population" on third world women (Curtin 74), whereby the "solution" amounts to preventing these women from having babies, coercively if need be. As Curtin argues, such thinking stems from a persistent colonial discourse, which effectively places the world's "population problem" as the fault of the unthinking and unconscious global South, taking the focus off the global North for its hand in both industrialized global pollution as well as over-consumption of available resources. As Ty, the American, remarks "I caused approximately two hundred fifty times the damage to the environment of this tattered, bleeding planet as a Bangladeshi or Balinese (...)" (FOE 55). Defending the earth is thus translated as the need to reduce the human population, to the point that Alma questions the environmental ethical responsibility of bringing children into a world that is already overcrowded: "Seven billion by 2013, seven billion and counting. And where are we going to put them all?" (WTKD 39). Being a dedicated environmentalist, "to bring a child into an overpopulated world is irresponsible, wrong, nothing less than sabotage" (WTKD 283). But in the same thought process, Alma gives herself permission to have a child because of her biological imperative as "a living thing" and "living things reproduce." Furthermore, she believes that they have an "obligation to pass their genes on if there's any hope of improving the species" (WTKD 284). Here, it is implicit that overpopulation is not so much the problem as is the propagation of the "right" kind of humans: those who possess high IQs, calm demeanors, and are physically beautiful. While she would probably not want to admit it, this thinking is alarmingly close to being social Darwinist in tone.

The concern for the voracious populations is also addressed in *Terra Sonâmbula* in the aforementioned episode of the palm trees and the flood, and also when a beached whale is hacked to pieces even before it has died, its death by the greedy masses compared to the raiding of the country in the throws of war. The slow death of the whale is also the death of hope "fazendo da esperança

uma maré vazando" (TS 31). But before the death of the whale is communion with it, as Kindzu recalls the youthful excitement of waiting to see a whale surface now and again, hearing it more than seeing it. Kindzu "apanhou doença da baleia" (TS 30) presumably because his sighs of depression and lethargy are reminiscent of the sound that the whales makes when surfacing for air. In this way, the larger, social and political sphere (the butchering of the whale by the masses) is made more painful because the beautiful solitary whale – large, impotent and inspiring when in the sea – becomes just another commodity to be consumed.

The consuming masses are also on the mind of Salufo, the ex-soldier in *A Varanda do Frangipani* when he decides to mine the ground around the fortress in order to protect himself and the elderly from the greedy relatives that will come from the city: "Eles hão-de vir aqui quando o capim deles acabar, lá nas cidades" (VDF 113). In doing this, he hoped to "fechar caminhos ao futuro," since the future is seen as a place where "tudo era convertido em capim, matéria de ser comida, ruminada e digerida em crescentes panças" (VDF 113-114).

Environmental Discrimination and Environmental Justice

Given the quantity of competing definitions of environmental discrimination, for the purpose of this paper I am expanding the definition here to “the relationship between institutionalized environmental degradation and disenfranchised communities”, where ‘communities’ refers to any disenfranchised group of beings, both human and non-human. It targets not just ethnic minorities, but any group whose political and economic power is limited. Environmental racism, from which discrimination was taken, was coined in the US as a result of the deliberate targeting of low-income and communities of color for toxic waste facilities in the North Carolina in the 1980 (Chavis 3). Current readings of environmental racism or discrimination usually consider the ways in which physical spaces are valued or devalued (and thus degraded) according to their proximity to centers of power and money. So that, for example, rural and poor areas are frequently the location of landfills and incinerators, which in turn devalues properties even further, thus negatively affecting the lives of humans and non-humans that are living in these areas. The

extent to which environmental racism is a global problem is well-documented: The exportation of computer, nuclear and other types of toxic waste from industrialized countries to those who have more lax environmental standards directly endangers the biotic communities which had no hand in the initial production of the waste. Using cheap labor in China, Asia, and Africa to dismantle toxic computer parts is commonplace. The dumping of nuclear waste in the Baltic is another example, which endangers the lives of the fauna that inhabit it.

The environmental justice movement emerged as a US grass-roots movement, which sought not only to expose environmental discrimination on an international scale but to create an international forum and policy definition, with the first summit held in Washington D.C. in 1991 (Chavis 4). Besides the issue of waste disposal, environmental justice attempts to address aspects of energy production, such as the extraction of coal. Mozambique has supplied generations of miners who work in South Africa, often returning with fatal illnesses and dying in explosions, as is told by Couto in several collections of stories[43]) The lack of regulation and safety when using harmful chemicals by laborers is yet another aspect that touches upon environmental discrimination. Pregnant América, we will recall, is driven by need and fear to clean statues using harsh chemicals without gloves, a fact which may have contributed to her child's blindness.

As one extends the argument to the non-human world, environmental discrimination is easily identified in the problematic stance that Alma, the state-sanctioned employee of the Park Services, takes in justifying the mass killing of several species by chemical attack. The institutionalized killing does not sit well with her, despite the knowledge that it is necessary if she is to preserve another, more threatened species, from extinction. The fact that the human impact on island life is the principal cause of imbalances (rats fleeing from ships, snakes hitching a ride on airplanes, and pigs and sheep brought from settlers) serves as her chief moral guide: she is only righting a wrong. Viewed, however, within the focus of environmental discrimination, these animals, demoted to "pests" are stripped of their right even to live. As preposterous as this may

[43] For example in "As Flores de Navidade" from the collection *Estórias Abensonhadas.*

seem, for the animot posthumanist, there can be not other way to view this action but as institutionalized genocide. A similar dilemma is encountered in the killing of the man-eating lions in *A Confissão da Leoa*: they are the sad result of human war and their murder weighs heavily on Arcanjo's conscious. As the story progresses, the species barrier between lion and (wo)man becomes more blurred, making it impossible for him to pull the trigger. Alma is only briefly conflicted by her role as killer, she finds peace of mind at the end of *When the Killing's Done*, her own life-affirming child nursing as she surveys her good deed among the congratulatory crowd. Arcanjo, however, is liberated by *not* having to kill anymore ("Eu e a caça divergimos de destino" 263).

Slow Violence

"Slow violence" is what Rob Nixon labels the kind of violence that takes a long time to both reveal itself as well as to end, the repercussions of which can have a lasting effect for centuries and generations. This kind of violence is less spectacular and more insidious, and, lacking the drama of "fast violence" (such as shootings, fires and hurricanes), is less apt to gain and keep media attention. In his essay "Slow Violence, Gender, and the Environmentalism of the Poor" Nixon elaborates using the example of Wangari Maathai, the environmental activist who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 for her part in the creation of the Green Belt Movement. Nixon is astute in noting that the pressure for demonstrating individual achievement runs counter to what is actually necessary in global environmental movements. The memoir genre, with its inherent emphasis on marketability, creates a vision of movements as propelled almost exclusively forward via its charismatic leaders. This formula continues to focus upon *individual* human efforts rather than *group* action that is can represent a real force to be reckoned with. Individuals can more easily be silenced, vilified and lambasted than an entire movement, which can gain widespread horizontal popular support with no real central pillar.

The kind of environmental activism critiqued in Boyle's works here reveal a similar lack of center, but based more on the individual activist rather than the group based activities. Murphy

finds the individualized efforts of groups like Earth First! more similar to the "rhizomatic organization" which runs counter to the more hierarchical leftist and Marxist parties with "democratic centralist orthodoxies" (Murphy, *Ecocritical* 73). The highly theatrical nature of their activities seen in *A Friend of the Earth* and *When the Killing's Done* – tree sitting, tree-spiking, sit-ins, vandalization of machinery – lends itself more to the "fast violence" media culture of the global North. But as Nixon notes, environmental activism techniques differ in the global South. In the example of the Green Belt Movement, more issues were intermingled with the environmental concern of soil erosion, giving rise to direct action of planting trees (Nixon, *Slow Violence* 267). This "environmentalism of the poor" has a direct effect on their ability to feed themselves and their children, while in the global North environmental groups are more clearly focused on conservation and preservation of wilderness and wild animals for their intrinsic value (nature for nature's sake) as well as for their aesthetic importance, as Alison Byerly has observed in her essay "The Uses of Landscape" in regards to the National Parks System in the US.

Slow violence speaks to the task of incorporating ecocritical and postcolonial concerns as well as social concerns such as women's rights, human rights, and land rights. Boyle comically (and tragically) explores the "fast violence" which feeds the direct action environmental movements in the US, while Couto's work speaks more of the “slow violence” which permeates the landscapes of pre- and post-war Mozambique. The relationship between “fast violence” and money is also relevant, for while Ty observes: "What was environmentalism but just another career?" (FOE 302) and which direct action publicity helps in gaining financial support, in *Terra Sonâmbula,* the costal population of Matimati lives off the "xicalamidades" (TS 81), the popular word to describe the donations from rich countries given to support the victims of natural calamities. Like the de-mining project exposed in *O ÚItimo Voo do Flamingo*, receiving money hinges upon both the "fast violence" of exploding land-mines, but it is also a comment on the "slow violence" of the persistence of mines in the ground long after the end of conflicts and their symbolic weight of conflicts gone, literally, underground. Similarly, the systemic violence against women and the

elderly in *A Confissão da Leoa* and *A Varanda do Frangipani,* respectively, are seen to be both fast and slow: the attack of the lions (a "fast violence") calling attention to the systemic "slow violence" of the disenfranchised lives of village women; the murder of the administrator warrants the presence of an investigator who then learns about the long-standing ("slow violence") neglect and abuse of the elderly in the asylum.

Boyle's protagonist in *A Friend of the Earth* is as much about the life of Ty as it is about the environmental organization Earth First!, whose livelihood depends on its ability to create marketable moments of fast violence that appear on television and the news, the media hype necessary to drum up membership and financial support, where top spokespeople like Andrea are well-paid. The romantic image of the self-sacrificing environmentalist is long gone. In its place is the marketability that the call to *Save the Earth*, which allows wealthy Americans to alleviate some of their consumer guilt by paying membership dues (As Ty remarks "Jewish guilt, Catholic guilt, enviro-eco-capitalistic guilt: (...) Of course, guilt itself is a luxury" (FOE 135). More a novel than an ecothriller, *A Friend of the Earth* focuses on the development of the human characters rather than the ensuing disaster itself, beginning from the end, with Ty-the-older recalling his early years as an environmentalist, spurred on by the resurgent interest in his daughter's martyrdom. The commodification of the direct action environmentalist's life in the form of a marketable biography has been remarked upon by Nixon, who noted that, although environmental movements are the work of a large number of people, there is a capitalist tendency to focus upon the individual achievements within the group. This insistence in viewing individual accomplishment rather than group effort is not only dishonest; it undermines a movement's base strength in its numbers. The individual human doing good is the theme to be sold, the example to follow, the life to admire. To what extent is the novel the wrong medium for such a huge endeavor? Does the continued focus of the human factor refuse a place for enlarging one's vision? While Boyle pokes fun at the environmental movements foibles, at the same time the novel serves to educate the public, toxic thriller-like, preaching in fact (although he would deny that this is what he is doing). Saving the

earth, if it means killing humans, is not an option, then. What does become as option is learning to live with the new state of affairs. And the environment, slow or fast, for the New York editor is not interesting: "He doesn't want to hear about the environment – the environment is all indoors now anyway (...) the environment is a bore" (282).

Conclusion

An ecocritical postcolonial approach to literature allows for an earth-centered perspective, at the same time permitting what Patrick D. Murphy calls a "transnational ecocritical theory" which rather than signify a singular unifying theory would "transect (…) the limitations of national perspectives and boundries" (Murphy, *Ecocritical* 63). Very recently[44], the scientific world in general and physicists specifically have been excited about the possible discovery of a particle, known as the Higgs boson, which would complete the so-called Standard Model, a guide to the particles thought to make up everything around us that is composed of "ordinary matter," some 5% of the total. Most other matter in the universe, however, has yet to be explained using scientific methodology of prediction and evidence. Understanding what is going on with the other 95% requires the imagination of theoretical physicists, whose hypotheses are frequently untestable. Theoretical physicists share the dilemma of those working in the humanities: if their work does not produce tangible "useful" results that translate into commercially useful items then what is their social utility?

> "Asking 'Why do physics?' is a bit like asking 'Why do art?'" says (Physicist Albion) Lawrence. "You want to help people live, but you also want to give them something to live for. For me, science is one of those things. You can't lose sight of that; otherwise, life is meaningless" (Levin 29).

In regarding natural environments, which include the land, plants and its animals, the same problem is encountered: as if the usefulness of the thing itself is merely contingent upon its label as a resource. This assumption is very rarely questioned, even in today's post-colonial consciousness. But as young Muidinga shows in *Terra Sonâmbula*, even when starving there are things that need to be preserved in order to maintain a connection with the human race:

[44] Levin, David. "Life After The Higgs." *Brandeis Magazine* Fall 2012/ Winter 2013: 26-29. Print.

> "Muidinga opõe-se a que o bicho seja morto. O cabrito lhe dá um sentimento de estar em aldeia, longe daquele lugar perdido. No facto, se passava o inacreditável: um bicho lhe trazia de volta o sentimento da família humana" (TS 50).

Ecocritial literary theory has much to gain from the experiences and writings from beyond the predominantly American and European academic institutions, specifically where social issues of dominance intersect, inquiries taken from postcolonial theories such as hybridity (Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Gayatri Spivak), the rhizome[45] (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Gauttari) creation of and speaking for the "Other" and imperialist environmental thought generally. Similarly, it behooves literary theorists and teachers of literature to become as ecologically and scientifically literate as they are socially and politically knowledgeable. To this end, the purpose of this thesis was to explore the ways in which writers from different sides of the globe write about the environment and in so doing explore the ways in which their approaches vary and in turn perhaps learn something about our world and the predicament it is in. As a crucial point of intersection, both Couto and Boyle propose a "reinhabitation[46]" of damaged lands whether from environmental change as in *A Friend of the Earth* or in the aftermath of war, as in A *Varanda do Frangipani,* from the restorative ecology of *When the Killing's Done*, to the paring of one's "animal" sensibilities to humans in both *A Tortilla Curtain* and *A Confesssão da Leoa*. Where these authors most significantly diverge is in their portrayals of worldviews regarding the very "nature" of nature: for while Boyle depicts the underlying hypocrisy of the so-called environmental movement, he predicts that as humans continue on their course of consumerism and personal gratification there is no other end possible but environmental apocalypse; Couto, on the other hand, reveals a worldview that regards the land and the animals as intrinsic parts of the experience of being human, a way of being in the world that is threatened, quickly disappearing along with the death of generations and their cultural memories (*A Varanda do Frangipani*), where the trappings of modernity are seen to threaten more ecological

[45] In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980).

[46] The term "reinhabitation" is a term that Gary Snyder coined in the 1970 and is defined by Buell to refer to learning to live with and in a place that has been disrupted and injured through past exploitation by settler cultures. It implies that previous inhabitants had lived on the land "more lightly" and should be viewed as a "model" for new inhabitants. A commitment to an ecologically sustainable lifestyle is implict in this idea (Buell, *Future* 146).

ways of being. But far from romanticizing "tradition", Couto is clearly critical of the ways in which traditional Mozambican societies have treated women, especially literate ones (*A Confissão da Leoa*).

The sense of one's place in the world is dramatically altered when considering the implications of environmental crisis as it sits in regard to globalization. As previous environmental crises have made abundantly clear (in the examples of the nuclear accident at Chernobyl, the chemical explosion in Bhopal, India, and the 2012 tsunami in Japan), one's "place" is no longer just a romantic synonym for home, belonging, and safety. In anticipating forms of disaster (the creating of "risk scenarios") these literary works become a reflection of a shift in thinking about what may become "real:"

> "In order to perceive risks as risks and to make them a reference point for one's own thought and action, one has to believe in fundamentally invisible causal connections (...) The "experiential logic" of everyday thought is, so to speak, turned upside down (...) Chemical formulae and reactions, invisible toxins, biological circuits and causal chains must dominate vision and thought to lead to active fighting against risks. In this sense, risk awareness is not based on "second-hand experience," but on "second-hand non-experience" (Beck as quoted in Heise, 180).

Thus it is the realm of the *invisible*, and one's belief in it, that serves as a guide to avoiding disaster. Heise notes a double bind that is present in the shift between seeing the world as a potential place of future disaster and the view of already living in a state of crisis, where there is neither a solution at hand nor any way to opt out of it. She reflects upon the pervasiveness such thinking has upon influencing environmental awareness for change, by recalling Buell:

> "On the one hand, (Buell) recognizes that a steady drumbeat of "gloom and doom" rhetoric is liable to discourage and alienate individuals more than it incites them to action; on the other, he is obviously worried that too much normalization of crisis might lead to an implicit acquiescence to the environmental status quo" (Heise 181).

These ideas are relevant to an analysis of the works of Boyle and Couto if one regards them as mission statements towards ecological understanding. Ty's "gloom and doom rhetoric" contrasts

with the alarming "normalization" that characterizes those around him. Belief in invisible forces of magic, spirits and animal guides are the domain of a Couto novel, where both warnings and signs are given through this medium and failure to heed the warnings is often fatal.

> "(Risk analysis) raises a range of interesting questions for literary and cultural study (...) the question of how an awareness of environmental deterioration and technological risk can become part of everyday life without leading to apocalyptic despair, reluctant resignation to a new state of normalcy or bored indifference has become an urgent issue for environmentalists and ecocritics" (Heise 181).

One of the objectives of the ecothriller, a sub-genre of horror fiction, is to create a "safe" state of anxiety, out of which a reader may emerge simultaneously relieved that her immediate reality is different from the imagined or future world. Ecothrillers gain force from the Western environmentalist sense of impending doom, of "time running out", their rhetoric one of "pontentiality" as Kerridge explains: "Tomorrow rather than now, elsewhere rather than here, a crisis building rather than a crisis reached" (Kerridge 244). But as observers[47] have noted, 2012 served as a turning point for environmental discussion in general, after the staging of presidential elections in the US were seriously threatened by a hurricane. While previously climate change was merely a supposition held by a few scientists, it is nowadays more generally perceived as a given.

Ecocriticical response to literature challenges writers and teachers to reconsider human-centered worldviews brought to light by the environmental crises: from tragedy's progress to comedy's acceptance, from dualistic reasoning to rhizomic logic, from *magic realism* to *deep fiction*, from humanism to posthumanism, from the excessively rational to the transcendent, from the addictive consumption of fast violence to a better understanding of slow violence. It requires a better grasp of interdisciplinary learning and a refusal to buy into the academic divide. And while not wanting to not completely "deprivilege the human subject" (Head 235), then to at least reaffirm our somewhat small but influential place within the biotic community.

[47] "Looking Back on a Year in Science." Narr. Charles Bergquist. Science Friday. National Public Radio. 4 January, 2013. http://www.sciencefriday.com/segment/01/04/2013/looking-back-on-a-year-in-science.html.Web.

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